

BROKEN

BONDS

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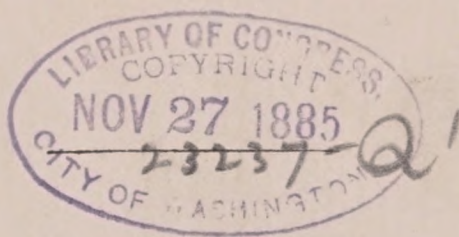
BROKEN BONDS

A NOVEL

BY

W. A. H. STAFFORD

35



1885

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TO LEONORE.

BROKEN BONDS.

I.

WHEN the story which I have resolved to tell is read, there will be some to wonder, and some to doubt, and not a few to discredit it altogether. To such I have but a word to say : what I here set down is true.

The man of whom I shall so frequently speak in these pages as Arthur Wardwell has a real existence. I have known and esteemed him through many years of varying fortune. At first he was naturally reluctant to have these pages of his life given to the world ; and it was only after long and persuasive argument that I at last obtained his consent. I agreed to make use of the incidents as they occurred, he stipulating that the names I used should be fictitious. At his suggestion, I changed the scene of the drama, and removed it to places where the principal actors and their lives were unknown. I also resolved to introduce certain minor effects which would further help to conceal the identity of the characters.

And only then did he bid me Godspeed in my undertaking.

Let me explain, now, that many of the facts in this narrative were not made known to me until recently; but I intend setting down, not only what I was cognizant of at the time, but also such information as I have gained since; so that, what were, when they happened, occurrences to me completely inexplicable, may be made plain to you.

We are looking out upon a smooth stretch of soft green lawn, shut in on all four sides by an unbroken line of wide piazzas with a continuous brick structure back of them. At one end where the corridor leading to the street commenced, were some ten or twelve musicians in the center of a chatting, laughing throng of men and women, youths and maidens, little boys and little babies, little girls in charge of nurses, and little shaggy dogs, which latter seemed to be the only animate objects upon which any one bestowed the smallest degree of solicitous attention.

At intervals along the white paths were knots, and moving, straggling groups of very modern young ladies and their dapper cavaliers. It was morning, and the rich simplicity of all the toilets evidenced how much thought had been expended upon the problem how to make the costliest display while obeying fashion's

laws. To the passive observer, the scene had all the brightness, all the beauty of a tableau. We both enjoyed it quietly from our point of view beyond the crowd. It was amusing to single out a couple and watch the little simpering gestures with the head, the theatrical glances, the well-bred manifestations of subdued mirth; all of which indicated that if the young lady was not enjoying the society of her male companion, at any rate she meant to pretend that there was some excitement in the little farce. For was not this the last month of the season? and had it not been part of her education ever since she could remember anything, or ever since papa made that lucky speculation, that this was the place, and this the time of all the year for the exercise of those arts which tradition says she must acquire and practice? It might not be enjoyment, but it was good form.

It was pleasant, if uncharitable, to sit there just out of ear shot of the nearest group and point out to each other the absurd characters in the ever changing show—the matron who would have been happy in the ability to forget her birthdays, with form so tortured out of nature's guise that the act of locomotion was an evidently painful task; the girl who once was young, conversing in a bird-like, playful fashion, perhaps, with the offspring of the

man who years ago was on the verge of a proposal; the belle who has for courtiers half a score of callow youths, all waiting hopefully until she may announce that she is tired and would seek diversion, whereupon that individual whom she chooses as an escort bears her off in triumph, while those he leaves behind mentally bestow their maledictions on him and their own luck.

Arthur smiled as he turned to me; "I say, Van, do you remember when we were like those boys? It was always the last pretty face in those days."

"Yes, and what terrible fellows we thought ourselves; seems a long time ago, doesn't it?"

"How odd," he said musingly, "that we should have escaped the nets we hadn't sense enough to see were spread for us. It was an awfully close shave for you though, wasn't it?"

This was a very sore subject with me, and I by no means relished his allusion. It was of no use to remonstrate; he would always have his own way, but I said, "For heaven's sake, won't you some day bury that joke and find a new one?"

"I hardly think so," he rejoined, still laughing. "You know, some one—who is it?—says old things are best after all. It will last my time, Van. Never fear."

"Hello, Wardwell!" I heard some one say who was crossing the grass from the direction of the billiard room.

"There's that ass Jenkins," Arthur muttered under his breath, as he rose and walked slowly toward the steps. The subject of this uncomplimentary comment was as effusive in his greeting as the other was calm and unruffled. "Why, this *is* a surprise," I heard him say in a tone which seemed to be all exclamation points. "Where did *you* come from? I haven't seen you since we were in Genoa together." I wonder if it was only my fancy, or did he really raise his voice and look around as he uttered the last sentence?

"I came from Lake George this morning," Arthur replied quietly. This was not a remark to excite surprise; nevertheless, the other exclaimed: "You don't say! Come over here, I want to introduce you to my wife. I didn't know her when I saw you last. Seems strange, doesn't it?"

I was unable to hear more, but followed them with my eyes as they walked toward the music. —Mr. Jenkins kept fast hold of Arthur's arm, as if fearful he entertained some idea of breaking away and making his escape. Presently they stopped just before a young woman who looked as if she might have recently recovered from an attack of the dropsy, her ghastly paleness

serving to accentuate the dark rings under her eyes.

While he is standing there trying not to look bored, let me tell you who he is; but first a word about myself who am introducing him.

I am a bachelor of thirty-two. My profession is the law; my circumstances are easy; and my expectations good, for I have a very old great aunt who intends leaving me her houses in the East Side tenement district. I live at my club, go into society but little, and am an intimate with very few people.

As far back as my memory carries me, Arthur Wardwell has been to me, who can not recollect a single near relation, all a brother could have been. Patient and helpful, he has done as much toward winning for me what little distinction I have achieved in my profession, as my own endeavors have accomplished, though he laughs incredulously when I tell him this.

During his boyhood his father died, leaving him alone in the world with a comfortable income, and fortunately he had had sufficient business tact to retain it, and enough ambition to add to it, so that now he was exceedingly well-to-do.

He was not the impossible "perfect" man some visionary females of uncertain age and abnormally developed imaginations are so fond

of telling us about. He had his faults, and, perhaps, a too great reliance upon his own unaided judgment was one of the most serious. He was amenable to reason until he had made up his mind; when he had finally done that, argument and appeal were simply a waste of breath. I used to tell him even to kill him would not convince him, for he would probably be ready to reiterate his opinion in another world.

He had no earnest purpose in life, no high ambition to gratify, and when I reflected how easily a man with such a will might attain any eminence he chose to covet, I could not resist the thought that nature sometimes makes grave mistakes in the distribution of brains. I was struggling hard in my profession, giving more of study to it than was conducive to good health, and straining every nerve to gain a little success, while he, a year my junior, without an arduous effort, easily out-stripped me: He should have looked to me for aid—instead, I leaned on him.

Fortunately our tastes did not tend toward the same amusements. There was therefore not so close an intimacy as to make it likely we would ever quarrel over the possession of any thing on which we might both fix our desires. We had been spending our summer vacation in the Adirondacks, and while he sketched, I

fished ; there could be no rivalry, and as a natural consequence there were no bickerings. We had agreed that it would be a pleasant change to stop for a few days at Saratoga, and here we were at one of the two large hotels. We expected to weary of it in a day or two, and would then go to Newport, and so home—that is, back to the club.

When I was finally tired of solitary communion with my thoughts, I walked in the direction Arthur had taken, and soon, looking over the heads of a bevy of chattering misses, saw him talking to the lady whom Mr. Jenkins was surprised he had not married before he had seen. He caught my eye and beckoned to me. I elbowed my way to where he stood, and was presented to Mrs. Jenkins and Miss Brainard ; the latter was engaged in some sort of woman's work which so engrossed her attention that she was obliged to bend her head over it, lest she should take a wrong stitch.

“Now, Alice,” Mrs. Jenkins said, in a sharp rasping tone with a suggestion of whining about it, “do put up that tiresome embroidery and entertain us. You do nothing but sew, sew, sew, from morning till night.”

“I am sure,” Miss Brainard said quietly, “I at least have been amused by Mr. Wardwell—I like eccentric ideas, they are not so hackneyed, even if they are not all sound.”

Her voice was unusually smooth and sweet. She looked up as she finished, and I thought there was a merry twinkle in her big brown eyes.

"Isn't it better," Arthur said, regarding her with a severe look which was quite thrown away, for she was again leaning over her work, "to have our own ideas, which are always called peculiar or eccentric, than to live by others' capital, and borrow current theories? Because I have said I can not understand how human beings endowed with the power of selection can endure the martyrdom of a treadmill existence like this, I am at once set down as peculiar, consequently wrong. I do not say I am right, nor seek to make converts to my theory; I simply express surprise."

She was smiling broadly now, evidently amused at his pretended earnestness and comprehending he was making no effort to justify himself, and perhaps realizing he was not the sort of man to think it worth while to conciliate her. It must have been patent to her that he was of a species quite distinct from the nice young men who were at that moment, no doubt, wondering what the deuce that big fellow whose complexion was so "beastly brown," wanted with the girl they were trying to flirt with.

"But," she remonstrated, laying her work down in her lap and folding her hands over it

with a graceful gesture. "You are so startlingly original. You would deliberately undermine the very foundations of modern society by depriving these good people of the satisfaction they enjoy in displaying their beautiful costumes; and what would we do, we women, without such a hotel as this, which is, after all, only our club? No, you are like the communists—forgive the comparison—you would pull down what you can not build up again; for there is nothing you could offer as a recompense for this kind of life."

Mrs. Jenkins had been fidgeting nervously and looking in open eyed amazement, not unmixed with disgust, at Miss Brainard. Once or twice she had essayed to speak, but had gotten no further than a little explosive grunt. Now she broke out in remonstrating disapproval. "Why, Alice, how can you? Of all the ideas I ever heard!—as if we never thought of any thing but dress! That's the way with men—they consider themselves the superior sex—but I would like to know who get up the flower shows, and the church fairs, and the sewing circles, and—and—oh! every thing else. I just wish Mr. Jenkins was here—he would help me against you all."

Miss Brainard soothed her with a shade of that pitying tenderness a mother is wont to assume toward a wayward child. I was expe-

riencing a new sensation. In a mild way I felt admiring respect for what I had seen of her character.

She spoke to me for the first time :

“Do you despise the sex also?”

She glanced at Arthur, expecting a protest, but none came ; he smiled as he met her glance. For a moment I was nonplussed, then I replied lamely : “You place me in a most embarrassing position. Should I give you a negative answer, it would be a tacit acknowledgment that your imputation against Wardwell was deserved. You force me to point out your error in supposing either him or me capable of despising a sex of which you are a member.”

She looked straight at me, nodding her head gently, and said, “That is very prettily said, and I appreciate the sincerity of the compliment.”

Mrs. Jenkins, meanwhile, was looking from one to the other, a vapid expression on her prematurely wrinkled face. There was no gleam of comprehension in her fishy eyes ; so, being moved by pity, I procured a chair and suffered martyrdom at her side until at length Miss Brainard rose to join her mother, whereupon I begged her to excuse me, which she did with flattering reluctance, and I joined Arthur who was strolling toward the street.

We lighted cigarettes and stood on the piazza gazing out upon the street. There could be

no doubt that this was a summer resort, the swarms of hotels of various sizes and various degrees of hastily-done shabbiness amply attested that fact. But why do people from the cities come to this place with its jostling crowds and stone pavements and excessive heat? To drink the waters? No; not one in ten has been endowed by nature with the necessary courage. What then? I asked Arthur his opinion. He turned from the contemplation of the stages filling up with passengers for the races and faced me.

"Do you know, Van, you have one glaring fault?" I laughed, but he was perfectly serious.

"If I were to believe you, and it is generally safer not to, I should think I had a million. What is the latest discovery?"

"You pass three-fourths of your waking hours in thinking up for my benefit a lot of idiotic questions which would give the sphinx a headache. Take my advice and throw off the habit while there is yet time."

"Look here," said I, "if a man in your condition can recover the use of his brain, perhaps you will make the effort and tell me what you think of Miss Brainard?"

"Well," he said, knocking the ash from his cigarette and regarding the end critically, as if he sought to derive his information from the

glowing coal, "I think she is—" he stopped abruptly, and taking out his watch and remarking it was almost dinner time, turned and led the way to our rooms.

At dinner I returned again to the subject and asked over our wine if it was yet his royal pleasure to reveal his estimate of the young lady.

Yes, he said he would tell me just what he thought of her. And his confidential opinion was—and he almost whispered it as he leaned across the table—that he didn't know what to think.

It was of no use ; if he had thought upon the subject at all, he had no intention of making a confidant of me, and I knew him well enough to be aware it would do no good to press the matter further. It did not matter. We might never see her again. We would neither of us seek her out, for women's society bored us both. Not that we made any parade of our ideas. We were convinced beyond the reach of argument that young girls were trained and aided by ambitious mothers to act as snares for the capture of an eligible *parti*. Entertaining that opinion, when a charming incarnation of evident beauty and apparent innocence vouchsafed us a tender smile or a heart-stirring hand pressure, it was to us the danger signal, and we never disregarded it. It was egotistical, pes-

simistic, uncharitable—what you will; but it was safe. We had, or thought we had, reached an age when there was no vulnerable point left open to attack. The halcyon days, when it was hard to think ill of any one, and the world was beautiful and seemed made for us, were all behind us. We had learned calculation and distrust—hard lessons and like hard blows sure to leave a scar.

After dinner we played a little pool, knocking the balls about lazily until I accidentally made a brilliant shot. Some one slapped me on the back crying “bravo!” It was Lyetel, a young Englishman, whose father had sent him over here to accept a small clerkship in a commission house, with the idea perhaps of getting rid of a troublesome spendthrift.

“Awf’ly good shot,” he drawled; “how d’ye do? Stopping here?”

We shook hands, and I introduced him to Arthur.

“Dull place, isn’t it? I don’t think I was ever in a stupider hole—nothing like our Brighton—that’s jolly, don’t you know. Going out to smoke? I’ll join you if you don’t mind.”

There is not much to be seen at that hour of the afternoon, the women, young and old, being engaged in the construction of the important “effect” of the day, and no doubt wondering if

Mrs. Smith or Miss Jones will surpass them again to-day by the greater richness of a yard of lace or a diamond bracelet, as she had done last night "the spiteful wretch!"

"How is it you're not at the races?" I asked Lyetel, knowing him to be proud of his horsey proclivities.

"I've had quite enough of them," he replied. "Every day for the past two weeks I have backed the wrong horse for biggish amounts; deuce of it is when I win it was usually a ticket in the 'Mutuels.'" We walked on silently for a moment, when he added: "Odd thing happened there yesterday. Devilish pretty girl, a Miss Brainard, was there for the first time. I was talking to her and her mother trying to explain the betting, don't you know." The oratorical effort was too much for him; he paused and puffed on his cigar for a moment. When he had rekindled the fire Arthur asked if he had succeeded.

"Yes, she's deuced quick—caught the idea at once and asked me what horse I should buy for the next race. I thought she really wanted advice, so I told her. Well, it was pretty rough what she did, she teased until she got her mother's consent and then she said, 'Here's five dollars, go and buy me that other one, I like his name better.' It was pure luck, but the old hack she had picked won in a canter. He was

way down in the betting, so she got quite a little money, and what do you suppose she did with it? It's ten to one you can't guess."

Nevertheless we both tried. Arthur said: "It doesn't require a seer to tell what the young ladies of this generation would be most likely to do with money. What is their leading idea? Dress, of course. Very well, then, she went straight to a dry goods store and laid it all out."

"No," I said, "I think you're wrong. She would not be likely to spend money which comes unexpectedly on what she would consider necessities. She bought some article of jewelry with it."

Lyetel smiled, but said nothing. "Well," I asked, "which of us is right?"

"It wouldn't be half a bad idea for you fellows to bet on it." We had heard the faint pounding of horses' hoofs down the road along which we had come, and now as they clattered up behind us we all turned round. "By Jove!" exclaimed Lyetel, hastily adjusting his monocle, "speak of the angels—here she is now."

As the riders swept past us, Miss Brainard bowed and smiled, and then we approved of her horsemanship and admired her figure and costume. She looked very attractive—most women do in a riding habit, if at all. Lyetel broke out with a suspicion of envy of the other's

good fortune, "That fellow's a duffer; he'll be on his horse's ears directly."

"How about our guesses?" Arthur asked.

"Won't you bet?" No, we would not.

"Then I'll tell you. She just bunched the money up in her hand and said she was ready to go—she thought it tiresome. I accepted their invitation to ride back in their carriage, and we started. Just outside the gate a woman has a flower stand, but she doesn't sell much. She's awfully pale and thin, and that sort of thing, and it can't pay very well, because most of the time she's holding a sickly looking child in her arms and singing to it; so every one goes on without noticing the few flowers. Directly Miss Brainard saw her, she runs up and stuffs the bills in the woman's hand, and says, 'That's for baby,' and comes back to us all smiles. The woman jumped up and tried to call out something after us, but she couldn't. She sat down, and as we drove away, she was rocking the child again and crying over it. I told her, in my opinion, it was a waste of good money—that I didn't believe in encouraging pauperism."

"What did she say to that?" I asked.

"What did she say? She didn't say a great deal, but"—he grimaced at the recollection—"I never will get into an argument with her again, don't you know."

II.

AFTER a time we turned back, and presently he asked if we were going to the ball that evening. I promptly replied that we were not, and was proceeding to say that we were too old birds to be caught with such chaff, when Arthur cut me short.

"I am going—out of curiosity," he explained, half apologetically. I was surprised and disgusted. I should be obliged in self-defense to go with him, for I did not relish the idea of moping about a half-empty hotel all the evening.

When we were back in our rooms, and the young Englishman had left us, I inquired what had put the notion into his head of going to this ball, a thing he had not done in years, except when the pressure was too strong, and now there was nothing to oblige him to go.

"As you say, Van, it is a notion. I would prefer to enjoy the soft luxury of this chair, with a good book for a companion, but—I suppose it's curiosity."

"Curiosity about what? You know what

these affairs always are, crowded, hot, tiresome."

He blew a cloud of smoke straight up, and watched it as it rolled out on the ceiling, then lowering his eyes, he looked at me a moment in silence, as if trying to read some riddle in my face. At last he said slowly, "There you go again with your confounded questions—I am going—verb. sap." Trifles are more wearing than real misfortunes, especially when one's life in great matters runs smoothly. I presume that is the reason why I was so annoyed.

We entered the ball room at half past ten, and were immediately subjected to a hearty hand shake from the gushing Mr. Jenkins. "How are you—how are you? Glad to see you here. What do you think of the decorations?" and he waved his hand with a proprietary gesture, as if he wanted it understood that he was responsible for the success of the whole affair.

"Excuse me a moment, you stay here—I'll be back in a second," and he darted off, dexterously dodging the promenaders, who were waiting for the music, and seizing a dwarfish, corpulent little man by the hand, gesticulated for a moment or two, and then bidding his victim adieu with elaborate courtesy, bustled back to us.

"Do you know who that was? That's one

of our lions ; he's an Italian count—isn't offish a bit—strange, don't you think so ?” This man appeared to be suffering from a chronic state of open-eyed astonishment.

“Come with me and I'll show you the most beautiful woman in the world. I admire her and she knows it, but she doesn't mind.”

Arthur looked at me and smiled covertly. As Jenkins was separated from us for an instant I said, “Some old hag, probably.” He led us up to his wife. Can it be, I thought, that this fool thinks her beautiful ? So much the better for him, but, great heaven ! to think that I am not to be allowed even to bore myself in my own way. He placed himself in front of us and we stood about ten feet from his consort. “Now wait until she turns around,” he said.

“Wait until who turns round ?” Arthur asked.

“That young lady talking to my wife.”

We looked in the direction indicated, and saw a shapely head crowned by rich brown hair of silky texture, above shoulders of perfect shape and delicate whiteness, that was all ; but presently she changed her position and we saw the face. It was Miss Brainard. I shall not describe her—Arthur did that ; he turned to Jenkins and remarked gravely, “You are quite right.”

The ladies smiled on seeing us and we joined them. Miss Brainard made room for Arthur, who took the chair next hers, while I stood before Mrs. Jenkins. That lady was fortunately in a silent mood, and I judged from her manner toward her spouse, anger at something he had done was not remotely connected with it. I therefore heard much of the conversation between Arthur and Miss Brainard.

"I did not expect to see you here, Mr. Wardwell," she said, "after what—"

"Pardon me," he interrupted, "you are going to say I am inconsistent, but in accusing me you do yourself an injustice, for I knew you were aware this morning I was not in earnest, and now you would have me believe you did not see through my pretended self-righteousness."

"How very acute you are, and you pay that compliment to my perceptive faculties in so delicate a manner that I ought not to reprove you."

"Do not make the mistake," he said, "of concluding there was no grain of sincerity in what I said. Most of it was argumentative trash, but I really had become tired years ago of dancing, and late hours, and mild flirtations, and find my pleasures in things more real and substantial."

"All of which makes it the more strange that

you are here to-night. Tell me why you came," she said persuasively.

He smiled. "If I knew, I would tell you gladly. I suppose it was a whim. Mr. Lyetel said there was to be a grand ball, and I at once knew it was what I wanted to do, so we came—much to my friend's disgust."

"Do you know Mr. Lyetel?" she inquired.

"I met him to-day for the first time. Van knows him. He's an Englishman, and as opinionated as most of his countrymen."

"You must not say any thing against Englishmen, they have a champion in me. They are so manly, and they have so much good breeding, and then they have the courage to declare their honest convictions. The men I have liked best were all Englishmen, with one exception."

"Yes," Arthur assented, "they are all very well, if you can keep out of an argument with them, and steer clear of the subject of their beloved little island."

"Just look around you," she said earnestly; "do you not think that manly sun-browned athletic men are preferable to these boys masquerading as men, and they will never be any thing but boys." She shrugged her shoulders with a pretty little gesture of contempt. "Ah!" she suddenly exclaimed, "there is my mother." Arthur rose and we were presented to a hand-

some woman, of fine carriage and a still good figure, who might easily have been mistaken for an elder sister of Miss Brainard.

"Mr. Wardwell," she said, "you bear a very strong resemblance to one of the dearest friends I ever had ; her name was Emily Canning ; she married a Mr. Wardwell."

"That was my mother," Arthur said quietly.

"I felt sure I could not be mistaken. You don't know how glad I am to meet you. We were so intimate until she went out West when you were only five years old and I lost track of her. At first she wrote frequently, but you know when women marry old ties are soon broken. I hope we shall see a great deal of you while you are here."

"You are very good," he replied. "We do not expect to remain many days. You see we are both lawyers and have not robbed an estate in nearly six weeks, so it is high time we returned."

Some one came to claim a dance from Miss Brainard, and Arthur took her chair.

"Miss Brainard dances well," he remarked.

"Forgive the fondness of a mother who has only one child, if I say she does every thing well," Mrs. Brainard replied, following her daughter with a smile of pleased approbation.

The old tactics, I thought ; she is laying the snare ; and the next instant I felt ashamed of

the unworthy suspicion. This was not the average mother; she was something altogether better.

The ubiquitous Mr. Jenkins came back and taking me one side pointed out a tall, fine-looking man with a pronounced foreign type of countenance. "See that fellow? Rich, rich as mud, got several millions they say—relative of the French minister—a marquis—has a big château, and a hotel in Paris, and all that. He wants to marry Miss B., but she won't have it. They say he proposed, but nobody can find out any thing—I tried."

"Isn't she engaged?" I asked.

"No, strange too. Now, there's a chance for you, but I'm afraid you wouldn't succeed."

"Don't be alarmed, I do not mean to try."

"No, that's right, that's right," he said, earnestly. "I believe she doesn't know what falling in love means, unless she's in love with herself, and I wouldn't blame her either. Just look at her! Did you ever see such a face and figure! By George, I mustn't let my wife hear me, though," and he glanced nervously round.

A couple of chairs had been vacated next to Mrs. Brainard, and I took one of them. She turned to me and said, "Please help me to convince Mr. Wardwell that he ought to be ashamed of himself; he says he has no ambition; is it true?"

"I am afraid it is. You see he is lazy and he makes successes without effort; it is too great facility that has ruined him."

Miss Brainard smiled, "Are you ruined?"

"I leave my justification in your hands," he replied. "I have an income which supports me, and my pursuits are my slaves who pander to my appetite for recreation, pleasure and ease; had I a great ambition I could no longer command, but would be forced to obey, and would soon become the plaything of my hobby."

"Do not appoint me your advocate," Miss Brainard said, "I can not agree with you."

"You have been getting into a rut," said the mother, "and your surroundings have kept you there. I do not believe you are indolent. Perhaps you only expend in other directions the energy which would make you famous if properly employed."

"You are charitable and I thank you," he replied. "I dreamed dreams once, but I never got much further than air castles. My illusions are all destroyed and now I am practical—and prosaic."

"Don't you go in for politics at all?"

"No, Miss Brainard, I am not rich enough to bear defeat, and a shade too honest to take in perquisites the cost of my election."

"Shall I tell you what you are?"

"No," he said quickly, leaning toward her, and his manner was no longer trifling—he was thoroughly in earnest. "No, for I should not like to hear you say I am something I would rather not have thought myself."

It seemed to me that it was the influence of his earnest gaze that made her look dreamily into his eyes and say: "It is a pity. You could do great things if you chose." Immediately becoming conscious of having established, perhaps, too confidential relations with an acquaintance of only a few hours, she colored and turned hastily to her mother with a remark that it was strange Mr. Cushing had not claimed that waltz.

I wanted a change, and thought it would please Arthur if I afforded him an opportunity to get away for a smoke. I was out in my reckoning. When I announced my intention, he said, "All right, I'll stay here." It was very strange—he was usually anxious enough to escape under similar circumstances.

I went down to the billiard room, lighted a cigar, and watched a game between Lyetel and a very young man with an abnormally large head and thin legs. The former asked me if I had the craze too.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! every one gets it, even the women,

some of them. You needn't be ashamed of it; I had it, but I saw there was no chance."

I could not resist the inclination to laugh at the man's absurdly knowing manner.

"Perhaps you will kindly explain what you are driving at," I said, half impatiently.

"Don't be so innocent; I saw you talking to her a few minutes ago."

He meant Miss Brainard. He was a little familiar on very short acquaintance, but I concealed my annoyance with the view of leading him on to talk of her; I was curious to hear what there was to know about this girl, whose name was on every one's lips.

"Pshaw, I don't believe in these exceedingly cold young ladies of dignified hauteur, who are supposed to be without heart or feeling. I never have met any."

"I know. Every man thinks that, but there are women who are not to be caught, and she is one of them."

"The theory is all right," I said, "but do you know of any who have failed to arouse her interest, beside yourself?"

"Not one, but twenty; some were half in earnest, luke-warm, don't you know, like myself, but half a dozen were hard hit. You couldn't get one of them to say a word against her, though. If their experience was like mine she never led 'em on a step."

He went to the table to make a shot, and missing, immediately returned.

"How is it," I asked, "that she could have had so many serious admirers in one summer?"

"Oh, a fellow would meet her in the evening, devote a couple of hours to an attempt at flirtation, and end by thinking himself desperately in love; next day he would be heart-broken to find his place occupied by a fresh aspirant, and he would either mope for a day or two, or if the case was serious, leave town."

This conversation gave me something to ponder over, something to wonder at. Was there really in what is known as good society a girl whose leading idea was not to make a rich marriage? I was not by any means convinced. Said I to myself, no marble is without its flaw; let us wait and see. Perhaps these fellows who fancied they loved her, were not recommended by a bank account. When I got back to the ball room, Arthur was still talking to her, and Mrs. Brainard and Mrs. Jenkins were seated together a few feet beyond.

As I approached I heard Miss Brainard say, "There comes your friend, he shall decide."

"Van, Miss Brainard says I am not ten years her senior, and she has appointed you referee."

"If Miss Brainard will do what few young

ladies are willing to do, I will render my decision instanter."

"I know what you mean," she said, smiling. "I am twenty-one."

"Then I must declare in favor of the enemy—he is thirty-one."

"As old as that!" she exclaimed, in all but a horror-stricken voice.

Arthur said, a little sadly I thought, "How ancient that seems to you. I remember at your age I used to think people who were past thirty were out of every thing; and I wondered if they did not begin to think they were growing old and death was not very far off. And forty I considered about the proper age to put earthly matters in shape and contemplate approaching dissolution."

"How absurd," she murmured.

"Pardon me, there is nearly as much fact as nonsense in it. There is an old axiom and a true one, that the days of our youth are golden. As the years slip by, the capability for enjoyment ceases, if we have not sown the ground properly for the harvest which shall cheer us in our old days. I think sometimes my life has been a mistake—that conviction is strong upon me to-night."

His elbows were on his knees; he was leaning forward looking gloomily at the floor.

"Why to-night, particularly?" she asked.

"Because I see about me younger men who have not become callous by nursing misanthropic notions, and I know that my chances for a brighter life are gone through my own fault." He raised his head and looked her straight in the face as he continued, "It is bitter to know that one is either too old or too hard to compete with fresher lives."

If her manner was an indication, she was interested in him. "Do you know, you are horribly pessimistic. My mother would tell you you needed tone and would send you away."

Arthur smiled, "That is the way with most physicians ; when they are at fault for a diagnosis they send the patient away ; the remedy may not effect a cure, but they relieve themselves of responsibility."

She drew me into the conversation by asking if he was often so blue, he had been giving her the shivers for the last half hour, she said.

"No," I replied, "he is not hilarious, except when poking fun at me, but I have never before seen him quite so funereal."

"You see, that is the effect of my society." Arthur made a strange remark in answer to this.

"Yes, it is," he said. Stranger still, instead of becoming indignant she blushed, and there ensued an awkward pause which Arthur broke

by saying we had had a long day and felt the need of rest, "I hope we shall see you to-morrow, Miss Brainard," he concluded.

"If your despondency is not followed by suicide," she smilingly replied.

"Perhaps hope may stay my hand," he said, as she went off on the arm of another partner. We bade good-night to her mother, who with hearty cordiality hoped she would see a great deal of us during our stay; whereupon Mrs. Jenkins vowed she would present us to every pretty girl in the house if we liked.

Once in our rooms I prepared for an immediate disappearance into bed, but Arthur said, "Hold on, Van, sit down and have a smoke. What do you say to a glass of wine?"

"I say that this beastly ball you insisted on my going to has used me up, and I'm going to bed."

"Don't be disagreeable," he returned, pushing the button to summon the waiter; "sit down, I want to talk to you."

I felt a little annoyed at his insistence, but yielded reluctantly—I always did that in the end when he had set his mind upon any thing.

"Well, you have kept me up half the night and I suppose you think I might as well be killed for an old sheep as a lamb. What is the momentous question you wish to discuss?"

He hesitated a moment.

"What do you think of Jenkins?"

It was a pointless question for him to ask, and a purposeless one; he was fencing to lead up to the matter which was on his mind. Why did he not frankly come to the point?

"Of what possible interest to you is my opinion of a man I know nothing about? Look here, Arthur, that is not what you wanted me to go without sleep for, and the sooner I know what you really want the better I shall like it."

He smiled somewhat consciously, and, avoiding my eyes, replied in a constrained tone:

"I thought you would like to have a cigar and a drink—hang it! you needn't be disagreeable about it; can't you talk over the evening, the people we have met, and all that?"

"Let me see—the people we have met—who did we meet? Lyetel, Jenkins and his charming wife, Mrs. Brainard and her daughter. Nothing remarkable about any of them."

He disregarded my comment, and stopping short in his nervous striding up and down the room, stood before me. His face was earnest and his tone serious.

"Van, when we occasionally find ourselves, as we did to-night, where young people appear to be enjoying themselves, we are in the habit of sneering at their foolishness. I wonder if our disgust is only sour envy, after all."

"This is a late day for you to turn traitor to

your convictions," I replied. "I didn't see any thing to-night to change my views. What are you driving at?"

He laughed uneasily.

"It is nonsense, no doubt, but—perhaps there are sincere women worthy of being believed in."

I said nothing, and in a moment he continued: "What do you think of Mrs. Brainard and her daughter? They seem to be very pleasant, unaffected people."

"Now we are getting at it," I exclaimed. "My opinion coincides with yours. I don't know what to think. They do not interest me."

He was visibly disappointed, and sat with his wine untasted beside him, gazing at the wall. He was silent for a long time. At length I arose and said:

"For a man who wanted to sit up and talk, you are remarkably silent. If you have nothing to say, I will leave you to your own cheerful society."

"Good-night," he muttered absently, without turning his head. I left him so deep in thought he took no heed of the expiring cigar held loosely between his fingers.

I could not understand him; he was not given to such moods, and the symptoms all indicated a strong disturbing influence, but I thought very little about his doubts that our distrust of the other sex was unjust. I was

sure of myself, and was equally confident of the steadfastness of his settled resolve. None of the pretty arts of modern misses could ever find a vulnerable point in his armor of contemptuous indifference. Perhaps his digestion was bad, or it might be the place bored him. I would propose leaving in the morning.

III.

TO-MORROW came, and my proposition to go away, on the plea that neither of us could find enjoyment in the place, met with no encouragement, and we staid on day after day. He said he rather liked it ; nevertheless, he did absolutely nothing, passing the mornings in sitting on the piazzas, talking to a lot of women of assorted ages. Miss Brainard was nearly always one of the group. Her mother had apparently formed a great liking for him ; she showed a deference to his opinion and an anxiety that he should be near her which were altogether singular ; her remarks were as often as not addressed to him, and she seemed to me to have the air of striving to win his good opinion purely out of a suddenly formed affectionate regard. The daughter was cordially pleasant, with a well-bred self-possession which never deserted her, but she was not demonstrative, nor did her manner ever pass the bounds of cool friendliness.

So they talked and strolled and drove together, and day by day the wonder grew

in my mind that he could so contentedly waste his time. Always to my query he would reply, "No, I am not yet ready to go; when I am tired of it, I shall pack up and be off in an hour; if you do not care to remain, I don't wish to keep you against your will." Then I would make up my mind that another day would be enough for him, and I would stay. And so it went on. There were balls at our hotel, and balls at two of the others, with concerts and garden parties in the intervals. We saw a great deal of the Brainards; if we did not accompany them, we were sure to meet them everywhere, and soon I began to admire the younger lady as her character unfolded itself. It was enough to make one think better of human nature to see the tender solicitude with which she watched for and anticipated her mother's wants.

Rhapsodies are not my forte, but if I could command the enthusiasm which was long ago crushed out, I would describe to you the evening of the fête upon the lawn; it was the affair of the season, and the management, as they say in the play-bills, had spared neither pains nor expense to make it go off with an *éclat* that would produce on the guests an impression likely to last until next season.

The night air was full of the halos of light from bright-colored lanterns hung in

festoons from tree to tree, there were arbors of flowers, and in the center the musicians played to a larger audience than they had ever had. It was fairy land, or would have been if the boundaries had not been the unlovely walls of staring brick.

Perhaps it was the scene, the gayety around him, or perhaps it was Miss Brainard's society that broke the shell of his defensive misanthropy, and carried Arthur out of himself. At any rate he was in exuberant spirits—he laughed and chatted and laughed again as I had not seen him do so carelessly since he was a boy of twenty. I stood upon the steps and watched them as they came slowly along the path, and thought how hard it would be to find a handsomer couple. When the world was not so old and love matches, not mercenary bargains, were made, how fitting it would have been that this strong man, with his honest face and fearless bearing, should mate with the noble, sweet-eyed girl at his side. Did I feel that little twinge of regret because those days were past and gone long ago, or because I thought my friend was incapable and unwilling to awaken love which might be worth the winning?

“Tell me,” he was saying, “why do you prefer Englishmen to Americans? you are not very patriotic.”

"Did I never tell you? Mamma took me to Europe two years ago after I had teased her for ever so long, and we met lots of Englishmen on the Continent: they were so nice to us! There was nothing they wouldn't do for us."

"I have no doubt of it," he rejoined; "but do you suppose they would do as much for—Mrs. Jenkins, for instance?"

She looked up at him wonderingly. "Why, of course, why shouldn't they?"

"Because Mrs. Jenkins is not beautiful."

She blushed, and quickly turning her face away, said in a colder tone: "They were just as kind to mamma as to me when we were traveling; it was a great help, for with the exception of the maid we were all alone most of the time."

"It was quite an undertaking for two ladies to travel so far alone."

"Yes," she replied; "but when papa was alive we went with him twice, and we knew how to get along pretty well." They went on quietly for a moment, "See," she exclaimed suddenly, "this beautiful bouquet was sent to me anonymously this evening; they are just the roses I am most fond of; they must have come from some one who knows me well; perhaps—but no, he is not here."

So there is a "he" Arthur thought, and somehow he felt a little unaccountable displeasure at the discovery. "He would probably feel

flattered if he knew how readily you attributed the gift to him."

"No, he wouldn't," she replied. "I thought first of him because he is an old friend, or rather his father knew our family intimately for years; and now he comes to see us quite often; I like him because he is more like an Englishman than any American I know."

"Tell me what the English manner is," Arthur said, bending toward her, "and I will try to assume it."

"I'm afraid the impersonation would not be natural." Suddenly she turned and looked inquiringly into his face, "Did *you* send these roses, Mr. Wardwell?"

"Yes."

"I thought so," she remarked.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because cards came with all the others." Realizing what she had said, the color mounted to her forehead and she bent her head over the flowers.

Strangely enough, Arthur's heart thrilled for a second with something very like joy. Of all she received she selected his, and she knew it was from him because she knew he would not make a bid for thanks by affixing his card. It would be flattering to any man's self esteem to know that such a woman appreciated the thoughtfulness of the gift and the delicate man-

ner in which it had been made; he hardly knew why the little episode and her manner should produce that feeling of exaltation. He looked attentively at her as the light fell full upon her clear-cut features, lending additional brilliancy to the calm eyes that seemed always to be looking at something far away which others could not see, and the new emotion like a sudden contraction of the heart caused his nerves to flutter. He was a man of well-poised self-confidence, but now in a moment he grew timorous as a school-boy; he could not have spoken in his natural voice to have saved his life. "Did you—did you wear those flowers because I sent them?"

By this time she had regained all her self-possession. She replied in her usual manner brightly, "I wore them because they are my favorites—you knew that, of course. Oh, there is that charming Lord Numskel; have you met him?"

I do not know whether at that time she cared for him or not, she probably did not know herself, but had she loved him with all her soul, with the perversity of the sex she would have made the same answer.

No, he had not met the noble lord and he did not care to.

"I ought to find fault with you or blame myself," she said.

"I do not understand you."

"Why," she went on lightly, "half an hour ago I flattered myself I had driven away a little of the cynicism that makes you carp at every thing, but now you have grown cross again and there is only one way to account for it—I exert a depressing influence upon you."

They were in a by-path out of the crowd; he stopped and she was naturally compelled to wait until he had said what he wished her to hear. He stood looking at her intently, and the longer he gazed upon the graceful figure before him the more disturbed he became.

"Miss Brainard," he began, "it may be that I will not have another opportunity to tell you how grateful I am for what you have done for me."

She looked up with an expression that was part wonder and part amusement. "I!" she said incredulously, "I have done nothing for you."

He said in a subdued, concentrated tone, looking earnestly into her eyes: "Shall I tell you what you have done?" then, without waiting for her answer, he went on, "You have shown me that all my foolish self-satisfied misanthropy was but bigoted conceit; you have forced upon me a better opinion of men and women; you find good in every thing; there is no one, however disagreeable or blameworthy, in whom you

can not find a redeeming trait ; and the happiness your sweet disposition brings to you shows me how mistaken I have been."

She was nervously picking a rose to pieces, not daring to meet his eyes. "What can I say?" she cried at length. "You put me in such an awkward position. Of course I am glad if I have had any thing to do with making you feel more charitably toward the world, but you are wrong in praising me so highly, I do not deserve any of it. Still," she added, after a slight pause, "I am very proud to have won this praise from you." She walked on, and he followed at her side.

That night I saw him take a rose from his button hole while he held a cigar in his hand and then—it was either the flower or the cigar he carried to his lips—I could not tell which.

A day or two afterward I said to him, "Do you know that the world is remarking upon the frequency with which you and Miss Brainard are seen together?"

"Let the world mind its own business," he growled.

"Exactly, but is it fair to her?"

"What do you mean?"

"I have no wish to assume the duties of Brainard *père* and ask you your intentions, but I would suggest that if you do not intend tak-

ing a partner for life, it is time you became more promiscuous in your attentions."

He was annoyed: he puffed vigorously at his cigar. "Have the fools been talking?"

"Not only Jenkins but others," I replied.

"Then I will end it," he exclaimed decidedly.

"Do you mean that you will go further in your new rôle and devote yourself to other belles, or will you go back to town like a sane man?"

"Neither," he said shortly.

Instantly it occurred to me that the only other thing he could do would be to propose for her hand. Could it be possible that he contemplated such a thing! "You don't mean to say you would marry her?" I inquired breathlessly.

He was sitting with his elbows on the table, his hands in his hair. "I don't know," he said slowly.

"Great heaven!" I ejaculated faintly, sinking into a chair. I was thunderstruck. Here was a man upon whose strength of character I would have relied, as I could not upon my own, calmly talking of the possibility of marrying. "You are not in earnest; you don't really mean it?"

He arose smiling and said absently, "No, no, of course not."

But the smile was not honest nor the words sincere, and from that moment I doubted him.

We had seen a great deal of the Brainards during many days, and, as was natural, the history and character of each one of us had come to the surface, and, in spite of myself, I came to look upon Miss Brainard as the type of a species of which she herself was the only existing member I had ever seen. Nevertheless the idea of a union between her and Arthur was extremely repugnant to me, and I tried to think there was no reasonable probability of it.

The end of the season was approaching: the piazzas became less crowded; occasionally a cool night would remind us that projected gayeties must be deferred until another season; the arrivals were few and the departures many. At last came the most welcome piece of news I had heard in weeks; the Brainards were to leave in two days, and Arthur signified his willingness to go on the morrow. I congratulated myself that the danger was past, for once back in town I felt confident of diverting his thoughts into busy channels which would crowd out sentimental musings.

That afternoon we accepted an invitation to drive to the lake with the Brainards. The day was clear and cool; overhead little ragged clouds floated slowly past, their white-

ness accenting the deep soft blue of the arched space. An opal tinted haze wrapped the distant hills and the further edge of the plain where the cattle grazed in a veil which made the view seem almost illimitable. Underneath the overarching trees, where the sunlight fell in golden patches on the darkened road, and out again into the glare to catch another beautiful vista of the valley we had left behind, with its drowsy calm and rich coloring of purple and green and gold, on we went briskly, the rapid trot of the horses changing our point of view continually and opening up new landscapes at every turn of the road.

When he chooses to make the exertion Arthur can shine in conversation as no other man of my acquaintance, but this morning he was in one of the gloomy moods which had recently become frequent with him. Mrs. Brainard and I were left to provide topics for the party, until at length his reticence became so marked that she asked him if he had heard any bad news.

"No," he said, "he was thinking of going away, that was all."

"Are you so sorry to leave," Miss Brainard inquired, with a more thoughtful look than was usual with her.

"Yes; not on account of the place, but the friends I have made."

Mrs. Brainard interposed, "But you will see them again. I should be sorry to think you meant never to call on us after you return to the city."

"Thank you," he replied, and looked at the daughter as if expecting an echo of the elder lady's cordial remark, but she was gazing thoughtfully out of the carriage and made no sign.

We relapsed into unsociable silence, and felt a sense of relief when we had reached our objective point. We alighted and strolled through a woodland path, Arthur with Miss Brainard perhaps unintentionally lagging behind.

He walked along kicking the twigs and switching the bushes with his cane, until finally her soft voice broke the silence. "Mr. Wardwell!" he turned toward her. "You seem so unhappy. It is wrong for a young man with all his best life before him to give way to gloomy thoughts. You make me feel sorry for you whenever I look at you."

Now for an attractive young lady to express compassion for a man of marriageable years is dangerous.

"And yet," he said doubtfully, "you would not help me if you could."

"Oh, yes, I would; it is such a terrible thing to have lost faith in every thing and every one. Believe me there are things worth living for. If

you would only strive to make a career for yourself!"

She was speaking earnestly, her face lighted with enthusiasm, forgetful, seemingly, of her companion, her surroundings, every thing except the idea that his was a life which ought not to be wasted. If he had fled from her before she showed this tender interest in his welfare, his future would have been very different; but such regrets are idle now.

Arthur's eyes sought hers. "Do you know the interest you take in me is the sweetest flattery I ever listened to?"

"Please do not think me insincere," she pleaded reproachfully.

"Let us understand each other," he said; "if I thought you really felt as strong an interest in me as your sweet words indicate, it would make me very happy."

The color stole into her face; she recognized all his meaning in the trembling earnestness of his tone. She said quickly and more coldly, "I pity all who deliberately waste their lives and take credit to themselves in thinking life not worth living."

"I thought so," he rejoined with intense bitterness; "you are like all the rest." Then forgetting prudence and good sense he went on impetuously:

"When I was a boy, visionary, dreaming

always of the unattainable, I drew in my mind the picture of the woman who should be my wife. Having made the copy, I went out into the world to seek the original. She must be fair, I said to myself, and she must be good, and wise ; she must be a queen among her kind, and she shall rule me as she will : slavery to such as she, if I shall find her, will be a glorious privilege. Well, for years I sought, but by and by the failure to find my impossible ideal wrought its natural result. I gave up all hope, and cherished the image of my boyish fancy almost as if it had had an actual existence, and by that standard I have measured every woman I have met. You will say it was unfair. I too was beginning to think so until two weeks ago, when I met one who in passing through the ordeal has effaced the old picture and created a new standard : she is beautiful, she is good, she is wise, she is sweet—ah ! how sweet she is ! Shall I tell you her name ?”

At first Miss Brainard had glanced at him quickly, a startled look on her face, then she clasped her hands nervously and walked slowly on, her eyes upon the ground. Before he had finished, her breath came quickly, she had grown pale, and she choked back a sob as she answered him.

“No,” she said, in a scarcely audible tone.

At that moment they came in sight of us

who had turned back, and they both walked silently on until we joined them.

"Well," said I, "you two people look as if you were going to a funeral."

Mrs. Brainard and I had the conversation to ourselves on the drive back, and in the pauses I tried to conjecture what had occurred.

We were to leave on the early train in the morning, so we said good-night and good-by to the people with whom we had become best acquainted, and finally shook hands with the Brainards. The elder lady said with hospitable earnestness, "If you both do not come to see us when we get back I shall never forgive you."

While I was saying a few last words to her, Arthur went to Miss Brainard and said, "Your mother has very kindly invited us to call; would you be displeased if I should come?"

"No," she said softly, "I should be glad."

His face lighted up. He hesitated a moment and then almost whispered, "Will you give me that flower?"

She blushed, and after a little indecision impulsively took it from her dress and handed it to him; and then she turned away, her head drooping, and her hands clasped.

"Good-by," he said. She took his hand and met his glance for a moment—and it was over. But there remained to him the flower and the

remembrance of the gentle pressure from the soft little hand.

I had seen the symptoms growing from the faintest doubtful indications to indisputable proof, but I had refrained from asking for his confidence. When I entered his room he was standing at the window looking up at the sky, a most woebegone expression on his face.

"Van, I want to tell you something."

"All right," I said, sitting down to prepare comfortably for what I knew was coming. He seated himself opposite me.

"By the way," he remarked, smiling faintly, "you needn't look so preternaturally innocent. You have seen something of what has been going on, and perhaps you have made guesses which are near the truth, but I want you now to know every thing, that you may not make the mistake of talking on the wrong side of the question. Let me anticipate your arguments and reproaches by telling you that this is a case past all remedy."

To say I was surprised, would not adequately express my emotions. I knew he liked the girl, and felt, perhaps in a stronger degree, the respect with which she had inspired me, but I had supposed a little reflection in his cooler moments would array against a passing fancy all the cogent reasons he had so often voiced to prove

that marriage is but another name for fatuous idiocy.

I sighed from the depth of my soul.

"So you are engaged. I suppose I shall become reconciled to the idea in time. At any rate, old man," I continued more heartily, "I can congratulate you sincerely upon doing the best you possibly could have done, since you were bent upon taking a wife. She is very charming."

He paid no attention to my outstretched hand, but said dolefully, "We are not engaged."

"Ah!" I exclaimed. "Then there is still a chance that——"

He cut me short; "No, there is no chance, I am too hard hit, old man."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes, as bad—or as good." And then he told me how he had first been impressed by her beauty, then had discovered one or two traits which won his respect; how he had begun to watch her closely, and the more vigilant his espionage became the more he was compelled to admire her; how he had cursed his weakness for thrilling at the touch of the dress she wore, or the pressure of her hand upon his arm; how time after time he had resolved to break away from the influence and could not command the courage to make the attempt; how he had struggled against the growth of the passion,

and knew now that long before he was willing to acknowledge it to himself, he loved her; how finally, this morning, fearing to let her go back to the influence of other men, and carried away by his emotion, he had been upon the point of declaring his love, but she had prevented him. It was premature, he knew, but he could not help it. "But, Van," he concluded, "whatever may happen, if in the end she refuses me, if she were to treat me with scorn and contempt, I shall love her until I die." Knowing him, I knew what he said was true. He said nothing to me at that time about the gift of the rose, and of course I knew nothing of her blushing confession that she would be glad if he would call when they returned, so I believed with him that his chances were neither good nor bad.

The next morning we came back to town.

IV.

IF unrequited affection makes of other men the insufferable bore that Arthur was to me during the three weeks that followed, I sincerely compassionate their friends. He could talk of nothing, think of nothing, but that girl—he was so far gone that he said he fretted at having to waste part of the twenty-four hours in sleep, for, try as he might, he could not dream of her. Over and over again he would recall to me each trivial incident of their brief acquaintance, but his endeavor to extract a little comfort from a recollection of her words or manner always ended in discouragement. I had not the effrontery to hold out any hope to him, for I honestly believed he had utterly failed to make any impression on her heart. All I felt justified in doing was to call to his attention the fact that their acquaintance had been too brief to expect she should care for him.

“But,” he would say, “from the first I felt that she was the one woman I could love.”

“You expect too much if you think she is going to forget in a moment all her prejudices in favor of correct young Englishmen. Go and

see her this fall and give her a chance to know you."

You will notice that at this time I commenced swimming with the tide. I was finally convinced it would be worse than useless—a waste of time—to try to bring him back to reason. I made up my mind to help him as far as I, who have had no experience of my own in such matters, was capable of doing. He was past cure: that was certain, and any other condition would be an improvement on his present frame of mind; so I, even I, would aid and abet a fellow-man, and that man my dearest friend, to pay court to a woman. It should be my first and last lapse from common sense, and I mentally asked absolution of my conscience.

One evening Arthur showed me a card on which was engraved, "Mrs. J. P. Brainard" and underneath "Miss Alice Brainard" and the number of their residence. "Van," said he, "I want you to oblige me by calling there soon, and find out if they—if she would be glad to see me."

"Don't be absurd," said I; "she told you with her own lips she expected you. I'd rather you would come with me."

But he was obstinate, and the following Tuesday evening being stormy I surmised they would be at home, so started on my diplomatic mission, by this time thoroughly interested in the success of my friend's suit.

They lived in a house which in any other country would be a show place and dubbed by Bædeker a "palace." It is one of those mansions, erected during the last few years, of which there are so many near Central Park above Fifty-eighth Street. The interior was quite in keeping with the outside, and displayed a lavish expenditure of money, which is not remarkable ; but also, what is less frequently encountered, the most perfect taste. The tone of the drawing room was luxurious to the last degree, but there was no offensive glitter, no gaudy piece of drapery or inartistic picture to destroy the perfect harmony of the general effect, and I was compelled to acknowledge that if this good taste emanated from the daughter, I must give her credit for qualities I had not supposed she possessed.

I really had a most enjoyable evening, and was congratulating myself that here was a family that did not bore me—one more house to be added to the small list of those I liked to visit occasionally, when a young man came in, and was introduced to me as Mr. Purvie. He was moderately tall, very narrow in the chest, had coal black hair and eyes, a sallow complexion, and he took care to make a lavish display of a set of gleaming white teeth when he smiled, which he did very often. I could not but admire the graceful curve of the well tended

mustache and the correct elegance of his dress.

His first remark, after greeting the ladies, was:

"It is a beastly disagreeable evening, don't you think? This sort of weather quite knocks one up." But he didn't say "up"—as he pronounced it, it sounded like "app."

He sat down and the conversation became general; he talked rather well, but I could not exactly make him out. Was he an Englishman? Yes, he must be; but where had he picked up those broad Western expressions he sometimes used when he became interested?

I concluded that his footing in this household was pretty secure, and that Miss Alice at least found him very agreeable. They appeared to be on the most confidential terms, and I overheard her tell him she expected to go to the Opera the next evening and should count on his coming to the box. Before I took my leave I was sure that this man was the stumbling-block in Arthur's way.

Miss Brainard politely expressed regret that my friend had not accompanied me, and the elder lady cordially said she liked him very much and hoped he would soon come to see them, and that I too must not make of myself a stranger.

The next morning as I came down stairs I

glanced at the list of new members who had been elected at the recent meeting of the committee, and at the top was the name, Philo. D. Purvie. It was an odd name. In all probability this was the man I had met last evening. Arthur joined me at breakfast—he lived at the club also—his impatience to know the result of my visit afforded me an excellent opportunity to provoke him, so I gave the waiter the order with unusual deliberation. When I had finished, before he could say a word, I purposely launched out into the analysis of a legal technicality which had arisen in one of the causes recently submitted to me, and expatiated at length on the merits of the question, until finally he suspected I was teasing him, and interrupted me in the middle of a magnificent burst of eloquence, with “Stop that infernal nonsense, will you? and tell me what I want to know!”

“All right. I haven’t much to tell though.”

“Out with it, whatever it is. Bad news is better than this suspense after a sleepless night.”

I gave him an exact account of what had occurred, repeating every word that was said as nearly as I could remember, and it really affected me to see how pleased he was when I told him she was expecting him to call. It was a very little thing to carry with it such a

lot of satisfaction. He must simply worship her. He was greatly troubled about Mr. Purvie. "That is the man she said she liked better than any American she had met." And then I had to again go over my description of his appearance, and the way in which they treated him, and my opinion of his deserts, until I was heartily sick of the whole matter, and glad to finally break away from him and go down town.

Arthur went very soon to call at the Brainards'. He found a gentleman in the drawing room, evidently waiting for one of the ladies; which one? There couldn't be much doubt, unless he was some relative, for his age put it out of the question that he had called to see the elder—he was evidently waiting for Miss Alice. Did not this man answer the description I had given him of Mr. — what the deuce was the outlandish name of that fellow who had recently come into the club? This must be he—not a bad looking chap, either, and well gotten up, too—there might have been a little more intelligence in the face, perhaps, but women would call him handsome—well, he would keep his eyes open, and try to find his vulnerable point. He hears a rustling noise as the door opens, and his heart is beating quickly and his face is radiant as he steps toward her, and hears her say in the voice that has been always of

late ringing in his brain, "I am very glad indeed to see you, Mr. Wardwell. I was afraid you had quite forgotten us. Now confess, wasn't it your friend who put you in mind of us?" Then she caught sight of Mr. Purvie, who had been hidden by Arthur's superior stature, and greeted him with a smile and a little familiar nod which that gentleman replied to in the same mute manner, and to my friend it seemed to denote a perfect understanding. She made the two men known to each other, and said, "I think you two ought to be very good friends, for you are so unlike each other."

"That is somewhat paradoxical; your process of reasoning must be a peculiar one."

"Not at all, you know they say people to get along well together must not possess similar tastes or dispositions."

"But, do you think you know what my tastes are sufficiently well to be able to contrast them with Mr. Purvie's?"

"I haven't known you long, but I fancy I can divine what you would be likely to care for. That is the only thing I pretend to be clever at, and when you have seen what a sorceress I am, you will banish that incredulous smile. To begin: I am sure, quite sure, you do not care for dancing, or any such frivolity."

Was this girl deliberately recalling that con-

versation in the ball room for the purpose of mortifying him? He had intimated then that he was not a dancing man; he looked straight into her eyes and the suspicion vanished; she could not be capable of it.

"This is hardly fair; you have been mentally measuring my boots."

"You need not expect any compliments. I am going to fearlessly tell you the truth. You do not care for riding or any form of violent exercise. I fear you are inclined to indolence; you would like to live a life of peaceful inaction—a *dolce far niente* sort of existence, with plenty of money and nothing to disturb you. You have the *savior-faire*, but you lack *verve* to make you a thorough-going man of the world."

Something would persist in whispering to him that this was a spoiled child, who had been led by over-indulgence and flattery to believe her opinions worthy of unquestioning indorsement, but—the true metal was there, and he would make it ring out its own honest tone yet.

He said, "It is fortunate for you we are not living in the old Colonial days, when they burned witches who uttered disagreeable truths. I infer that Mr. Purvie possesses all the qualities which you say I lack."

Mr. Purvie displayed a dazzling array of teeth, as he said with his highly cultivated

accent, "I must protest, Miss Brainard, you are too awfully complimentary. Don't you know, I don't think a man ought to take credit to himself for those things, for they are a matter of education. Almost every man I know can ride and tool a pair of horses and all that."

There wasn't much point to this speech, but he evidently wanted to insinuate that he associated with a "correct" set and did the "correct" thing himself, and that he didn't think any man who could not do those things was "proper form" at all.

"You ride a great deal in England?" Arthur suggested.

He appeared a little annoyed: "Yes, when I am there I ride to hounds a lot."

He turned to Miss Brainard and was about to speak—but Arthur was not yet through with him; he thought he detected an evasion and he would satisfy himself—he said quickly, "How often do you go there?"

He would not give a direct answer.

"I haven't been on the other side now in two years."

"Do you not get homesick after being away from your native land so long?"

"Why, no, I—that is, I am not an Englishman, you know—I am an American."

"I beg your pardon, I was misled by your

accent: I presume you acquired that by a long residence there?"

This time he was positively annoyed and showed it by forgetting to talk unnaturally.

"I was there a little less than a year."

"Why, Mr. Purvie," said Miss Brainard, "is it possible you were in England no longer than that? I supposed you had been there nearly all your life from the lot you have told me about your adventures. That must have been a very busy year."

He was glum by this time. "Yes, it was," was all he answered, and his face did not look as handsome as when it wore a smiling expression.

"What do you do with yourself all day long, Mr. Wardwell? I never see you in the Park."

Evidently this girl's ideas of life were a trifle narrow and crude.

"Why, if you are so accomplished a clairvoyant, you ought to know that I do nothing but lie upon a bank of daffodils and daisies and dream that even existence is wrong, since it necessitates exertion."

"Now you are laughing at me. But I really do think you would not take the trouble to do any thing like hard work."

He became very serious and she saw she had hurt him.

"I regret you should have that opinion of me," said he quietly.

Mr. Purvie had by this time smoothed out the wrinkles and recovered his accent; he was looking for a chance to cry quits with Arthur.

"I should feel complimented if any one were to say that of me. For my part, I think there ought to be in society a distinct line drawn between people who work and those who do not."

"I quite agree with you," Arthur said meaningly, with a little smile which was reflected on Miss Brainard's face; but this indorsement did not seem to suit him, he was worsted again. Pretty soon he rose, pleading another engagement, and took his leave.

As the door shut him out Arthur sighed with intense relief.

He was alone with her. Was she sorry the other man had gone first? He would find out. "I hope my presence had nothing to do with Mr. Purvie's departure," he ventured suggestively.

"I think what you said to him had something to do with it, and I am afraid I shall have to abandon my theory that you and he would get along well together."

"I am very sorry, I had not intended to be rude."

"Oh, he will come back," said she, with a

little smile; "he always does, no matter how seriously he may be offended. I quarrel dreadfully with that man, but he doesn't seem to care. I don't know what I should do if I no longer had any one to tease. And he is so serious at times—that is when he amuses me most."

"Will you permit me to speak frankly to you, Miss Brainard?"

She colored slightly, and said, "Yes, that is—"

He saw her embarrassment, and hastened to say with a tinge of bitterness he could not altogether conceal, "You need not be alarmed, I will not forget myself again. I was going to say that I think you could if you chose drive a man to despair, and I am afraid you are not merciful."

"Oh, he doesn't mind, I can't seriously offend him: he doesn't care for what I say: I would not treat every one as I do him: you know he is a very old friend. But let us talk of something more interesting. Have you been to the exhibition at the Academy?"

"I was there for a few moments at the private view."

"Why, so was I, but I didn't see you, though I admired a picture by an artist of your name—a relative probably, is he not?"

"Yes, a near relation," he said.

She was looking at him steadily, but he would not meet her eyes. After a little pause she said, "What are your initials, Mr. Wardwell?"

"A. D."

"Did you paint that picture?"

"Well—yes—I did," he confessed reluctantly. "Will you forgive me? I had made the figure of the girl with quite a different face, but somehow when I came to finish it after my return to town, I could not resist an impulse that had taken fast hold of me, and I involuntarily changed it; after all, it is not a perfect likeness. Will you say that you are not offended?" he pleaded earnestly.

She did not reply, but sat looking at him in an absorbed dreamy way, her eyes half closed and with heightened color. But was she vexed or pleased? He could not tell. All he was certain of was that it would be dangerous to gaze long in silence upon that perfect face—he would be losing his head presently. Finally she spoke.

"Yes, I will forgive you, if you will let me purchase the picture."

"Pardon me, it is not for sale. I am not an artist."

"You are not an artist!" said she, with wide open eyes; "then how could you have painted so beautiful a picture? Why, my

friends all said they knew at once that the face was intended for me, but of course I had no idea you had done it. If you are not an artist, what are you?"

"Does a sorceress need to be told? I thought I was an idler who could do nothing well except wish to be relieved from the task of existing."

"Please don't take every thing I say *au grand sérieux*," said she, with a pretty little air of entreaty. "Won't you tell me if you have a business or profession?"

"I am a lawyer, but I find time for the indulgence of the few artistic tastes I have. You see I am not eminent in my profession, as I hope to be some day, and am not always busy."

"Are you ambitious to make a great name for yourself? Oh! if I were a man I should try *so* hard to achieve a success that would make all the world applaud."

This was her true self, impulsive, great-hearted, ambitious, as he had known so surely she must be.

"A woman in her sphere can live as noble a life as the man who gains the approbation of the world, but true women in these degenerate days are seldom encountered; I am not preaching," he said, with a smile, "I state what my observation has taught me,"

“Are we so full of faults? And yet there are apparently a sufficient number of men ready to fall in love with us—or is it our money, I wonder? But poor girls are married too, so it can not always be a matter of dollars and cents.”

Arthur was disturbed; had this girl money? He had never given it a thought. She certainly must have; if her surroundings indicated any thing, it was that this establishment necessitated the possession of a very large income by the occupant, and, her father being dead, probably what she had was hers in her own right. The possession of a fortune would have a tendency to make any woman suspicious of the motives of her admirers, and she had without doubt thought him capable of deliberately laying siege to her heart with her bank account in full view.

“Should I ever marry, a thing which I used to think impossible, and which now seems unlikely, I should want my wife to come to me without a penny. I should think the home which is not provided for by the husband, could not be a happy one.”

There was a look on her face of admiration.

“But how could any one get along without money? I suppose I never think of it, because I have all I want, but I know sometimes I have

to use a lot, and then if I hadn't it, it would be bad, wouldn't it?"

He was amused at the matter-of-course way in which she regarded the possession of her own wealth.

"I once knew what it was to be without a penny for two weeks, and in a strangeland, too; you wouldn't have liked that, would you?"

"No, indeed. Please tell me about it. What country were you in?"

"The most beautiful in the world, I think—Switzerland."

"I didn't know you had been abroad."

"Yes, I wandered about there for six years."

She was intensely interested now. The fact that he had been abroad seemed to him to establish more confidential relations at once. He related the little incident, which was nothing more than the loss of his trunk in which he had carelessly put his letter of credit, and on the presentation of his bill at the "Hotel Baur au Lac" in Constance, the manager had politely listened to his story, and as courteously intimated that he did not believe a word of it; but suggested that if Arthur would like to accept the position of his assistant, the regular incumbent being ill, and Arthur having the necessary knowledge of French and German, he might stay there a week or two, and would receive his board and lodging, but no money. On those

conditions he would forgive him the amount of the bill. The idea was absurd, but Arthur knew no one there, and there was no choice, so he closed with the offer at once, and with the help of a few necessary articles of clothing which he happened to have in his satchel, managed to get along very well. In the meantime he telegraphed his lawyer in New York, to cable him a remittance at once; but that gentleman was shooting deer in the Adirondacks and did not return until ten days thereafter, when he hastened to send the money, and wrote profuse apologies. As luck would have it, the missing trunk turned up, and the funds arrived on the same day. The adventure had not amounted to any thing, but it had taught him that to be without pocket money for two weeks is not a desirable predicament.

She listened to him with deep attention, and said how plucky of him it was to attempt such a thing. Had he been all over Europe?

No, he had never been to Russia; he had wandered around staying as long in a place as he felt amused, and then going on to the next town, or perhaps, if he happened to be on the Continent, and felt tired of listening to foreign tongues, he would run over to England, where he knew some people. After a little experience he had learned to shun the places in the line of tourists' travel, and had enjoyed himself.

far better in the less accessible parts of Spain and the Austrian Tyrol. He had come back a better American than when he started. He liked his own country best, though he was not as fortunate as some, in having a home to come back to. "My poor mother died when I was very young, and I sometimes wish that when she left me I had not been old enough to retain a distinct recollection of her, for the thought of what a home her love would have made for me, calls up bitter regrets and useless anger."

His voice was not quite steady; the thought of his mother's early death always aroused a mingled sense of sorrowful regret and unreasoning rage; he looked away, half ashamed of his emotion—she would not understand him, he thought.

"Poor fellow!"

He started; she was leaning forward in her chair, her hands clasped and her face and her whole air expressive of the sweetest, tenderest pity. His passionate glance recalled her to herself, and she said quickly, but only just in time to check him—"Shall I sing for you, Mr. Wardwell?"

She rose and he followed her slowly.

"Now," said she, as she seated herself at the piano, "you shall choose the song; what shall it be?"

"Do you know that little French chanson-

ette, I have forgotten the name of it, but it begins "Si vous n'avez rien"—and he hummed a bar or two. Yes, she knew it, and as she uttered the tender notes, it seemed to him that the meaning of the word ecstasy would be expressed for him, in placing both his hands tenderly upon her lovely hair and gently, reverently, kissing that pure, young face.

She stopped playing and exclaimed suddenly: "I have an idea!—but, no, you do not ride."

"Oh, yes, I do," he hastened to say.

"Really? I think it is unkind of you to turn out to be so different from the character I gave you. Is there any thing, I wonder, you *can not* do?"

Her beauty was maddening; it had intoxicated him.

He looked into her eyes and said, "Yes, there is one thing I had set my whole heart and soul upon doing, but I—"

She cut him short. "Well, I am awfully glad you can ride, for I want you to go with me to the Park day after to-morrow at half-past four."

He was delighted; this was something he had not hoped for, fate had evidently come over to his side.

"I can give you a mount," she went on; "Mr. Purvie will be one of the party."

That confounded fellow again, that altered the case ; should he go ? Yes, for it might lead to other rides when the objectionable third party would be absent.

So it was arranged that he should go, and, saying good-night, he left his heart and all his hopes behind him, and came away.

He knew now that if he was to live contentedly in the future it must be with her, and his great wonder was, how he had existed all these years without her.

V.

HE crossed over to the walk next to the stone wall which separates Fifth Avenue from the Park and sauntered along slowly, thinking, as well as the chaotic state of his brain would permit him, of the evening he had spent, and trying to reduce the confusing impressions to a net result. Had he made any progress? Yes, he thought he had; why, of course, he had gotten along famously, but she wouldn't hear a tender word yet; would she ever listen to him? However, he was sure of one thing; she was no longer artificial with *him*; she seemed to be influenced by something he had said or done to lay aside the mask, and how inexpressibly charming she was.

Two days afterward, at the appointed hour, Arthur pushed the electric button which in these days of improvements replaces the bell-pull, and turned around to admire the horses which a groom was holding before the door. They were thorough-bred looking animals, and were giving the man considerable trouble to quiet them. One in particular, a large bay horse with a wicked eye, was plunging and rearing in the effort to get away. He noticed with sur-

prise that there were four of them—probably the groom was going along, it was rather singular.

Mr. Purvie was there before him, and there was a young lady with very blonde hair, fat features and round good-natured eyes ; she was a Miss Montland. They went down the stoop, Miss Brainard saying, “ Now the most experienced rider in this party being Mr. Purvie, I propose he shall have Tony, the big horse, you know.” No objection being possible under the circumstances, the ladies mounted and then Mr. Purvie attempted to get deliberately and in a graceful manner upon the back of his horse, but Master Tony appeared to entertain decided objections to the proceeding, and it required the united efforts of Arthur and the groom to fix him firmly in the saddle. No sooner was the horse's head released, than he bounded up the street, jumping first to one side and then to the other and apparently stepping on nothing but air, and one plunge more frantic than the rest unhorsed his rider, who slid off in spite of the despairing effort he was making to retain his seat by clutching the mane ; he sank limply upon the sidewalk. They were all much alarmed, and hastened to ask him if he was hurt, while the groom picked him up and brushed off the dust. He proved to be uninjured, but was dreadfully scared and deeply mortified.

"Why—why"—he gasped jerkily, "what an extraordinary horse! You shouldn't have given me such a beast, Miss Brainard; he must be mad."

"I am very sorry," she said, and there was a suspicion of contempt in the look with which she regarded his ghastly face and staring eyes; "he is feeling a little fresh, but you shouldn't have pulled on the curb."

"Take this horse, Mr. Purvie," said Arthur, as he tied the curb rein up short; "she is perfectly gentle and you need only use the snaffle; just leave the curb rein on her neck."

He was seized with a new attack of terror.

"No, no, I wouldn't for the world. You would have to stay at home yourself, no—I am going down town—I have an engagement there I ought to keep."

"Nonsense, you won't be depriving me of the ride at all, I shall use the horse that threw you."

"Please, *please*, Mr. Wardwell, don't get on that horse."

He would have gone through any thing to hear her speak like that, to see her face so full of a pleading concerned expression. Had he been sure of a broken limb he would have ridden the horse now.

"I assure you," said he, "there is no danger."

"But, pray consider, Mr. Purvie was thrown,

and he has had so much more experience than you."

He could not forbear smiling as he said, "Has he? At any rate I am quite sure I won't be thrown, and I beg of you not to be at all uneasy on my account."

By this time the groom had returned, having captured the animal, and was doing his best to quiet him and keep out of the way of his hoofs.

Arthur said, "Now, my man, just hold that right stirrup, will you?"

He put his hunting crop between his teeth, gathered the reins up carefully in his left hand, and as the horse became quiet for a second he thrust his foot quickly into the left stirrup, sprang lightly on his back, and as the animal reared drove his spurs deep into his sides. The infuriated beast leaped madly forward, but his rider's hand was strong and firm, and after a few more capers, he stood still, his nostrils dilated and his muscles quivering; he was conquered—for that time, at least.

After the start the ride was uneventful, and to Arthur not particularly pleasant, for, by the exercise of well-timed finesse, Miss Brainard, with a woman's perversity, kept Mr. Purvie at her side, leaving Miss Montland and Arthur to bring up the rear.

Why did she shun him? He was miserable again, torturing himself with the thought that

he had unconsciously offended her. He was reasonably certain she was not enamored of this fellow Purvie, yet there he was engaged in earnest conversation with a girl who ought not to waste a thought upon him; how gracious she was too, leaning slightly toward him as if fearful of losing a word. How well she looked on a horse! Her close fitting habit displaying the exquisite curves of her rather slight figure. Arthur endeavored to make himself agreeable to the young girl who had been allotted him, but he was conscious that the attempt was a dismal failure.

As they were going home Miss Brainard rode at his side for a moment; she said in a voice that was not audible to the others:

“I have discovered another of your accomplishments, your horsemanship is perfect.”

He fairly blushed with pleasure.

“I am a little rusty, but I used to ride very well. This is a splendid animal; is he yours?”

“No, he belongs to a cousin of mine, Jack Elmer, who is in school. By the by, that fortunately reminds me I was charged by my mother to be sure to ask you to dinner for Thursday. It will be quite *en famille*; there will be no one but mamma, you, Jack, and myself. Jack is coming down to keep the house in an uproar while his vacation lasts; I know you’ll

like him ; he is only eighteen, but he is awfully jolly."

It may be imagined that this invitation afforded him great satisfaction ; here was the opportunity he had hoped for—to meet them in the privacy of their home life ; and for them to extend this favor to him, who, after all, was a comparative stranger, was evidence that he was not classed among their ordinary acquaintances.

On the following Thursday he found Mrs. and Miss Brainard and a young man in the drawing room ; he surmised the latter was the cousin ; he was a tall fair-haired lanky boy who had attained a man's height at the expense of an undeveloped chest ; he had frank blue eyes and an honest fearless carriage. He was shy at first, but when the novelty of Arthur's presence had worn off his timidity vanished.

The mother had the rare gift of being unaffectedly cordial, and the element of constraint was noticeably absent ; the dinner was consequently as unlike the usual appetite-destroying affair as possible.

"What a delightful house you have," Arthur remarked. "I should think no ordinary temptation would make you forsake all this comfort for the worry of a two years' trip abroad ; did you not regret having to bid it farewell when the time came for leaving?"

"We did not live here then. I was one of

those unprogressive New Yorkers who still clung to Washington Square. All my life until three years ago was passed there, and when the people to whom I sold the house finally took possession, I think I felt as badly at bidding the old home good-by as when I caught the last glimpse of the Highlands from the deck of the steamer. But," she went on, brightening, "of course I had not my own feelings to consider; I was going because Alice wished to, and I can make myself at home wherever she is. We are a very small family, but we are united," she concluded, smiling.

He discovered that this woman had one thought, one ambition—to try with all her heart to keep her daughter's life in sunny paths, and he was touched by the affection that lighted up her glance whenever her eyes rested upon her; how thoroughly she was wrapped up in her motherly solicitude and pride in the girl! To a wanderer like himself, without ties or kindred, the contrast of his lonely life with the charm of this perfect home, forced upon him the conviction that his self-gratulatory contentment had been an empty delusion made plain by this glimpse of what a home might be.

"Aunt," said Jack, "I wish you'd take me the next time you go to England; it must be 'immense' to ride to hounds as Mr. Purvie says he does; perhaps if you asked him, Alice, he'd

give me a letter of introduction to some of his friends over there."

Alice could not forbear smiling as she caught the amused expression on Arthur's face.

"I don't think you had better depend on that, Jack."

This was practically an implied admission that she had lost confidence in Purvie's statements, and as a symptom, it gave Arthur a disproportionate amount of satisfaction; it was, he felt, one more point gained against the man he regarded as his rival, or rather it was a step backward for that rival, even if his own affair was not bettered any.

When they had returned to the drawing room, Miss Brainard adroitly led him into talking of himself, his life abroad, his profession; and Jack leaned forward, drinking in every word, completely absorbed and lost in admiration of a man who could tell of such wonders in so matter-of-fact a way, sinking his own personality and relating incidents which had happened to other men and strange occurrences which had come to his knowledge through his clients. But he was most interested when Arthur came to tell of the queer places he had lived in in Spain, of the beauties of Seville, the grandeur of the Alhambra, and the horrors of the bull fights. Ah! he would never forget that graphic picture of the bull fight; how he

would like to be such a man as this who appeared to know every thing and to have been everywhere! And he was made very happy when Arthur, who had taken a great fancy to the boy, asked him to come to the club to dinner the next day.

He said to Alice that night as he was going up stairs.

“Do you want to do me a great favor?”

“Yes, Jack, if I can.”

“Well, just try to capture that fellow—he’s a brick.”

I took dinner with them the next day, and found the boy most amusing; he was bright, clever and manly, and his comments were expressed in such crisp sharp language that we all three did far more laughing than eating. When we went up to the billiard room for a game of pool, we found Mr. Purvie there; we shook hands with him, cigars were ordered, and we commenced to play. Mr. Purvie showed to better advantage than on any previous occasion when either of us had seen him, and I decided that he wasn’t a bad sort of fellow—probably quite up to the caliber of the ordinary society man—not a genius certainly, but gentlemanly and inoffensive; a trifle too boastful, and perhaps not well born; but in America the latter qualification was superfluous, and, providing the man was presentable, it made

little difference, after all, whether his father had been a butcher or the direct descendant of the Norman robber, so long as he kept his ancestry to himself.

He pleaded an engagement shortly, and went out, and Jack said :

"I don't take any stock in him ; he's what Cousin Alice would call a 'cad,' only she always sticks up for him, somehow. I don't think much of his sister, either."

"Perhaps she isn't pretty enough to suit your fastidious taste," said I.

"No, it isn't that, she's about as pretty as they grow. I'll tell you what made me down on her. The other day, after old Jeffreys had left me in the car, at Philadelphia (he's the old fossil that runs my school, you know), Purvie and a girl got in, but he didn't notice me, and they sat down in the seat in front of me, and pretty soon he commenced talking an awful lot of soft stuff to her, and when she talked to him she wasn't very choice about what she said, I can tell you. She had a brogue like a French woman. He happened to turn around and saw me, and he got awful red, and then he had to introduce his sister, and I had a jolly good talk with her."

I did not, at the time, attach any importance to the boy's chatter, but later on I was very glad I had not forgotten it.

The next two months were to Arthur at once the most delightful and the most miserable he had ever experienced, for, while morally sure that he had gained a higher place in Miss Brainard's esteem, he was uncertain whether she was content to look upon him as a suitor, or simply regarded him as a good friend of herself and her mother, and he dared not risk an open avowal of his love.

What tortures he had endured in restraining himself from clasping her in his arms when she had been strongly moved by something he had said, and had looked up at him with her lovely eyes full of earnest sympathy! But he dared not; he felt so unworthy of the love of such a perfect woman, that he could not believe it possible she should care for him. Ah! if he had only yielded to the impulse!—Well, if he had, I should have no story to tell you.

So between hope and fear he lived upon thoughts of her, mechanically performing his daily task when away from her, and taking no heed of any thing until he found himself in her presence; the hours spent with me, or in his office, or at the club, were devoted to looking forward to his next interview with her. He tried to believe she cared for him a little, for otherwise, would she, knowing he loved her, encourage his visits? But she never for one instant forgot herself; and surely a woman

who loved passionately, could not, on all occasions, preserve a calm exterior. Yet, stay, had she done so? Was it only fancy and his great desire that it should be so, which made him believe he had at times seen a softly tender look in her eyes when they rested upon him?

He would bear this suspense no longer; there were two of them for her to choose between, Purvie and himself. If she preferred the other man he would give way. No, he could not, he *could not*! He would die; there were many painless paths out of trouble into a peaceful life, and he would take one of them. No, he would not do that, it would be cowardly and low, but if he could not have her, how could he live? if necessary, he would give his body to the torture and his soul to perdition, if he could but live the rest of his life with her—but without her! He had done nothing to deserve a punishment which would make of existence a long agony of regret, and he could not even think of the possibility of losing her.

Do you think his passion unnaturally strong? Well, so did I, but I do not understand those things, and he was not in any thing conventional, you know; he always went to extremes when he was in earnest, and I presume, in a case of this kind, his thoroughness would be

as apt to show itself as in any ordinary matter.

I shall remember one evening as long as I live. He and I were sitting in the reading room, and he had just told me he intended to have his fate decided that evening, as he nervously chewed the end of his cigar, when Purvie joined us; he was constantly at the club these days, and I understood he had been making big bets and had lost heavily. On this occasion he was just a trifle the worse for liquor; he sat down, and said:

"I say, Wardwell, you seemed to take some interest in that irrigation scheme I was talking about the other night, don't you know? Now if you would like to see a working model, you might meet me at the house of the inventor any day you choose to name. Wait, I'll give you his address," and he took a letter from his pocket, wrote something on the back, and tearing off the half sheet, handed it to Arthur, who took it carelessly and put it in his pocket, remarking in a preoccupied way that he would let him know when he would go. I thought Purvie's manner indicated suppressed excitement, an unusual thing in him, but I attributed it to the wine he had drunk; he rose and left us abruptly.

I asked what the scheme was. Arthur said, as he understood it, it was some kind of an

arrangement by means of Artesian wells and pumps to irrigate the vast tracts of country in such localities as portions of Colorado and Arizona, where the rain-fall is insufficient.

“ I didn’t think Purvie was capable of inventing any thing.”

“ He didn’t get it up ; it’s some friend of his. Let’s see, what is the name ? ” He took the paper out of his pocket. “ Thos. McDonald, 498 William Street ; ” then he turned the scrap over and went on, “ Well, I shan’t bother myself to— ” he passed his hand across his eyes and held the paper up where the strong light from an Argand burner could fall full upon it.

I never in all my life saw such a ghastly horrible look upon the face of a human being ; for a second he seemed struck by death, his eyes were glazed, and his face, even his lips were the color of a corpse.

I started up and took his arm, “ What is it ? For heaven’s sake what is the matter with you ? ”

He said not a word, but shook me off roughly, folded the paper and put it back carefully into his pocket, his hand trembling like a drunkard’s ; turning round he grasped the back of the chair to steady himself and walked with uncertain steps out of the room and down the stairs ; the last glimpse I had of him he was leaning heavily on the banisters, his lips parted

and his eyes looking straight before him into space.

I did not follow him, for I imagined he would not thank me for interfering. I had no doubt it was something connected with his love affair, and he would get over it with the aid of solitude and a little calm reflection. He was horribly disturbed, there could be no doubt of that; but then he was in love for the first time in his life, and when that sort of thing comes to a man who has escaped such foolishness for thirty years, it must take a stronger hold upon him and cause him to feel more keenly than if he were younger, the fears and jealousies, always a part of the beautiful state which since the beginning has made of wise men, weak-brained children. These arguments were all very well, but they would not drive away the image of his face, with its terrible paleness, its staring eyes and fallen jaw. Something extraordinary had happened; but to follow him now would do no good, he was in no state to give me an explanation. I would wait until to-morrow morning, when we would meet at breakfast.

I tried to think no more of it, but I caught myself every few minutes speculating upon the occurrence, and that night my rest was broken once with a vision of that tortured face.

VI.

THE next morning I waited for him half an hour, and finally ordered my own breakfast. I ate it slowly, every moment expecting he would come, and finally sent the waiter to his room to call him. When he came down he reported that the room was empty and his trunk gone. I was amazed ; there must be some mistake. I asked the steward if he had seen him that morning ; he said that at seven o'clock Mr. Wardwell had ordered a cab, had his trunk brought down, and had driven away. This was more serious than I had supposed. Where could he have gone ? Why did he go without saying a word to me ?

“ Did you hear him give any directions to the driver ? ” I asked, anxiously.

“ Yes, sir ; just as he was a-getting into the cab, he says, ‘ Down town as fast as ever you can go, ’ and cabby, he whipped down the avenue like mad. I hope he ain’t a-going for long, sir.”

“ No, I think not. And is that all you heard him say ? ”

“ Every word, sir ; he didn’t look like himself

at all this morning, sir, he was very pale and he kept a-biting his mustache in a kind of a nervous way. I hope he ain't sick, sir?"

"Not at all. You can say to any one who asks for him that he has gone away on business."

I went out and down the street, trying to think what I should do next. What could I do? Here was this fellow turned rattle-brained through a girl, starting off on a trip—a long trip, probably, as he had taken his trunk—and never saying as much as good-by to me. Of course it was that something which had so deeply affected him last night that had driven him off. What had that been? I could not even guess at it, but I could try to find him and bring him back to his senses and his friends. An idea struck me—perhaps the Brainards were going away and he had gone with them. Why, of course—strange, I should not have thought before of the only influence that had ever made him forgetful of me. I would go to their house at once. The servant who opened the door said the ladies were at home but were at breakfast, would I wait? No, I would not disturb them, I would just write a few lines which he would please hand to Mrs. Brainard. I scratched on the back of a card, "Did Arthur Wardwell call here last evening, and if so, did he say any thing about going away?"

I stepped inside the door, and in a minute

Miss Brainard came running up stairs and said, with a troubled white face, "What is the matter? Has any thing happened? Please tell me quickly."

I looked at her and knew that her soul no longer slept, that the veil of calm reserve had been torn aside by love for him.

"It is nothing, Miss Brainard, I assure you. Nothing that need alarm you, he will come back all right in a day or two, I dare say."

"Come back! Why where has he gone?"

"That is precisely what I don't know. Tell me, did he come here last evening?"

"No, and I was expecting him,—I was quite certain he would come, for I got a note from him in the afternoon saying he would like to see me particularly and would call at nine."

She blushed, probably she knew from the words in which the note was couched that he intended to bring matters to a crisis.

I was greatly perplexed; he had not seen her and yet I was sure something in which she was more or less directly concerned had occurred to drive him away. It must be a graver affair than I had supposed, or he would have kept his appointment. As I glanced at the beautiful girl sitting opposite me, I knew, had he spoken to her last evening he would now have been the happiest man in all the world. That air of tender concern, and the deep blush as she

spoke of him told me as plainly as if she had said so, that she loved him.

“Don’t be anxious ; he was probably called away suddenly on business and will be back in a day or two.”

“When did you see him last ? ”

“At about eight o’clock last night at the club,” and I told her how he had left me without a word.

“Strange,” said she, and then she leaned forward and said, “You know that he and I—that is—that we—we are very great friends, and I want you to promise me you will find him and bring him back.” Her voice was a little unsteady. I saw that she was struggling to master her feelings, so I rose at once and said, “You may depend upon it I shall find him soon, and I beg you will not be uneasy ; I am confident it is nothing more serious than some annoying business engagement. I will immediately report to you the least scrap of news.”

She gave me her hand, and turning away her head, said, “Thank you, so much.”

Now, said I to myself, when I was in the street once more, where am I to begin ? Where could he have gone ? He had no secrets from me, and I knew there was no business matter that would take him away, while on the other hand there was everything to keep him in town. I would go first to his office ; there

was just a possibility he had taken his trunk there for some purpose. I hailed a cab, and on the way I endeavored to go over the situation calmly in the vain hope of finding some clew to his purpose in running away from such a woman. I was compelled to acknowledge to myself that if this girl loved him a man might be excused for taking the irrevocable step. The office boy informed me that Arthur had not been there since the day before yesterday, and had left no particular instructions.

I felt discouraged and was at my wit's end ; the only thing to be done now was to go to my own office and wait for a message, which he might send me ; if that did not come, and he had not returned, the last resort would be to call in the services of a private detective, for he might have been lured into a trap and made the victim of foul play ; this was very possible, for he always persisted, in spite of my remonstrances, in carrying a large sum of money in his pocket. I remained in my office until four o'clock, but no word came from him, and I went up town. There was no news of him at the club, and now, completely discouraged, I went to the Brainards'. They had hoped for some tidings, and were greatly distressed when they learned I had none. Jack, in particular, although he was not as concerned as his cousin, was more demonstrative.

"Why, I should think it would be easy enough to find him; he's too smart to let any body get the best of him; if he'd been going for a long time he would have let us know. I guess he'll turn up all right to-morrow." He turned to me and asked if he could go with me and help in the search. I thought perhaps I might be able to make him useful, and his hopefulness would cheer me up, so I consented, and we went out together.

"Let's see," said he, "in the first place he went away this morning in a cab; I suppose you have seen the driver?"

No, I had not. I had wasted a whole day, and here was this boy suggesting the simplest and most practical method of finding out what we wanted to know. Decidedly my head was getting thick. When I confessed to him I had not thought of it, I could see he was inwardly delighted.

On interrogating the boy who had fetched the cab, he said he could easily find it again, as he knew the driver. In a few moments the vehicle drove up and I hastened to put my questions to the driver. Had a gentleman hired him that morning at the club at about seven o'clock?

Well, yes, he had taken in a gent at about seven, but had that boy brought him all the way around there to answer a pack of questions?

“Yes, but it will be worth your while to answer them correctly,” and I slipped some money into his hand.

“Oh, all right, boss, all right, I’ll tell you all I know about it. Yer see the gent had his trunk put on top and he was gitten in an’ I says, ‘Where to?’ An’ he says, ‘Down town quick,’ says he. An’ when we got down to Bleecker Street he sticks his head out er the window an’ says he, ‘I want a paper,’ he says. So pretty soon I see a boy an’ I says, ‘The gent inside wants a paper, Johnny.’—Yer see, boss, I’m givin’ yer all the partic’lers. I s’pose that’s all right.”

“Yes, yes, go on—go on.”

“Well bime by, when we was down by the City Hall, the gent he sticks his head out er the window agin an’ he says, ‘Do you know where the Cunard Line office is,’ says he, an’ I says, ‘Of course I do.’ ‘Well,’ he says, ‘drive there as quick as ever you kin.’ I got him there in no time, and he went in, and after a while he come out an’ he says, ‘Drive to the Cunard pier, quick,’ says he. An’ I got him there all right, an’ he had his trunk put aboard, an’ if every gent give me what he did I wouldn’t drive no hack long, you kin bet; an’ that’s all I know about it.”

“You say he went aboard the steamer—what vessel was it?”

“The ‘Gallia.’”

“Do you know when she sails?”

“She left a half hour after the gent got aboard.”

Now we knew the worst; the fellow could tell us nothing more, so I thanked him and we went in.

The dinner was a gloomy affair enough. I expected the worst news would have been a great deal better than this, and I felt like a man who has staked his last dollar and lost. Why had he done this insane thing? Ay, that was the question! What was it that had driven him to it?

Jack said very little, but I believe he felt as badly as I did; but he managed to eat something, and pretty soon he commenced to take a more hopeful view.

When we had arrived at cigarettes and coffee, he said:

“I’ll bet you anything you like he got a telegram from some one in England to come over right off—he’s been there so much he must know a lot of people, and maybe some of them got into trouble and asked him to go over. It would be just like him to take the first steamer and go and help ’em out, wouldn’t it?”

I shook my head, “No, Jack, that can’t be it; I knew all his affairs, and if he had received any such message I should have heard of it at once.

Besides, that would not account for his leaving me without a word. There is your cousin too."

"Yes, that's so, that's what puzzles me. You ought to see how she went on to-day after you left; I finished my breakfast just as you shut the door, and I found her in the hall leaning her head against the wall and crying like a good fellow. I asked her what the matter was, and she said, 'Don't, Jack, don't ask me;' and then aunt came up and put her arm round her, and told her to tell her all about it, and I heard her say, 'Oh! mamma, mamma, I didn't know I loved him so, and now he has gone away.' Well, she cried right straight ahead and couldn't say a word until aunt got her up stairs. Afterward I heard all about it, and maybe I wasn't surprised to think he had gone! But it'll all come out right, after all."

I could only say, "I hope so, Jack, I hope so."

Mr. Purvie came in looking quite as irreproachable as usual and perhaps a thought more jaunty: he sauntered up to our table and accepted my invitation to take a little Cognac, saying as he sat down, "I don't see your friend about this evening; I presume he finds the society of Miss B. a deal more agreeable even than yours."

"No, he is not here," said I, ignoring the latter part of his remark.

“Where is he?”

This man was curious, and his direct question annoyed me; but I reflected that he was in all probability suffering the pangs of the most acute jealousy, for he must have seen that Arthur was in his way at the Brainards'. Allowances must be made for a man who thought himself in danger of losing such a girl. Should I tell him that he had gone without a word? No, it would leak out eventually, but there was no necessity for crying it from the house tops.

“I really don't know where he is.” This was literally true, for at that time he might be off Fire Island or Montauk Point.

“I am sorry not to see him, for I thought perhaps he would go to-morrow to inspect a patent I am interested in. You haven't any idea where I would be likely to find him?”

“No, I could not say, as I told you before.”

He thanked me, and making an elaborate bow left us. A thought occurred to me. I would send a cable message to meet the steamer on its arrival at Queenstown. Jack applauded the idea, and we set our heads together to decide how it should be worded; we finally agreed upon this form:—

To Arthur Wardwell, on board Steamer Gallia, Queenstown, Ireland.

We all beg you to come back immediately.

Van.

"You see, Jack," said I, "if we put that word 'all' in there, he may understand that it means your cousin too, and if any thing will bring him back that will."

The next morning when I went down town I sent the message, and then I felt I had done all a man could do under the circumstances and there was nothing for it now but to wait for the arrival of either a telegram or a letter.

In the course of the next few days it became known at the club that Arthur had suddenly gone to England. Some one had seen his name in the passenger list of the boat, and another one had met him on the deck just before she sailed. When interrogated, I said he had been telegraphed for to attend to important business interests in London.

When Purvie heard it he drawled out, "I quite envy your friend, don't you know. What an awfully jolly time he will have. A fellow can have so much better time in the old country, you know."

I went that evening to the Brainards'. Mr. Purvie had arrived before me; I staid only a short time, and when I was going Alice came to the door with me and asked wistfully, "Have you heard any thing?"

"No," said I, and hastened to add, "it isn't time yet."

"Will he ever come back, I wonder?"

“I am sure of it. Keep a brave heart.”

I went there almost every evening, but on each occasion I found Purvie there, and my intention of cheering her up and convincing her that Arthur was stanch by telling her all I knew of his character was frustrated; I could speak unreservedly now, for she had betrayed her secret, but I could find no opportunity; that fellow was always there, mounting guard, as it were, to prevent any other enemy from making an attack, now that the field was clear. When Arthur got back, this man would be put out of his misery, for on Arthur's return I would give him a hint of her love for him and the affair would be speedily arranged. That cable message would bring him back.

When the Gallia had been gone ten days, I received the anxiously expected message. I think my hand trembled as I tore open the envelope, and I was excusable, for a great deal hung upon the contents. I unfolded the paper and read:

I shall never come back.

Arthur.

I was stupefied. My brain whirled. What in heaven's name did it mean? With a splendid career before him, with a good income, with the only woman he had ever loved ready to give him her heart, this man telegraphs me he would never come back to his native land. Oh!

he was mad, that was what it was, just simply stark, raving crazy! The "never" of some men means very little, but I knew he would keep his word. Now what was I to do? How could I go to that girl and show her such a message? Yet I must do it; and what would she think of the constancy, the truth, the honor of a man who after ten days' absence could in cold blood send back to the woman he had professed to love, such a heartless message? It was so unlike him, that as I sat staring at the writing I could hardly trust my eyes. There was somewhere some awful mistake; I could not believe him base; I would stake every thing I held most dear he was not that. What a terrible blow it would be to her. Well, I'd better have it over. I put on my hat and started on the most disagreeable errand that had ever fallen to my lot.

As I stood in the drawing room waiting for her, my feelings were not enviable, and when I heard her footstep on the stair no culprit could have felt more guilty.

She smiled faintly as she came toward me, and the hopefully expectant tone cut me to the heart when she said:

"You have news?" She looked in my face with those big, patient eyes, but I could not bear her gaze. I looked away and answered,

"Yes, I got a telegram to-day."

She saw all was not right, and exclaimed in a quick, concentrated way, "Something has happened! Tell me quickly what!"

I glanced at her: she was standing perfectly still, her face as gray as ashes, her soul blazing in her wide open eyes.

"I said in a voice that I was conscious sounded like a far-off echo, "He arrived safely and is well."

"Thank God!" she murmured, and sank into a chair; she drew a long breath and brightened wonderfully. "Really, you have a remarkable way of telling good news. Your face was quite a study."

I could not smile; I was wishing with all my soul that I could avoid wounding that gentle, trusting heart. I would try at any rate to break it to her gradually; I would endeavor to put his action in the most favorable light.

I commenced, gravely: "I think, Miss Brainard, the time has come when I may, indeed when I ought, to speak plainly to you. I am Arthur's oldest and most intimate friend. We have been companions, comrades, since childhood, have enjoyed our little happinesses together, and have shared our hours of despondency; I know him thoroughly, and I say to you now, upon my word of honor, I never knew him to do any thing unworthy a man, and if he has voluntarily left his country and the

woman he loves beyond all power of mine to tell you, the reason must be almost as irresistible as death itself. What it is I do not know, and can not even guess, but he has gone; and you and I may never see him again."

She clutched the arms of her chair, and looked at me wildly, and her lips moved, but I could not hear a word.

I extended the message toward her. She stretched out her hand and took it, still with her eyes riveted on my face.

"Read it," said I.

She held it before her face, her hand trembling, and looked intently at it for one moment, and then she uttered a cry such as will escape a man in mortal terror, started up, and staggering a few steps, grasped the edge of a table, leaning heavily against it, while with the other hand pressed upon her temple she looked toward me, but with a blank, dazed expression that told me she saw nothing, realized nothing, except that awful message. Gradually the whole weight of the blow seemed to make itself felt; she began to think; and then the terrible truth that he would never come back to her was more than she could bear, and she turned from me and burying her face in her hands, sobbed convulsively.

When I could master my own emotion, I said:

"I know it must seem to you incredible that

he could care for you and still leave you, but *I know* that you were more dear to him than his life, that all his hopes of happiness were centered in you; that he simply worshiped you."

She turned upon me a scornful face. "You ask me to believe this after what has occurred? If you are not deceived, how do you explain his leaving me forever?" She broke down again, "and I—I loved him so," she sobbed pitifully.

I felt a choking sensation in my throat, and for the first time in my life I was so indignant at Arthur that if I could have reached him, he would have fared badly.

Pretty soon she dried her eyes, and rising, gave me her hand.

"I thank you for all your kindness, but your loyalty to your friend makes you think better of him than he deserves. Nothing could explain his going away if he had cared for me; *I* know that so well. Come and see us after a little, and if—if you hear from him tell me about it."

With the love of this girl his for the asking, the fool had turned his back on his good fortune, and fled to Europe like the meanest criminal. Had I through all these years been mistaken in his character? Was his manliness hypocrisy, and his frankness but a cloak that

hid a craven's heart? No, I must be losing my senses ; but what was it? And I turned the problem over and over in my mind, but could think of no solution, until it flashed across me that such a thing could be only the work of an enemy ; but there was the insuperable objection to this, that he had none ; he was disliked by many, as all men are who have talents enough to excite envy, but there was no one who would work him so much harm. I would write to him : I would bring all my powers of reason and persuasion to bear—but, no, I need not do that ; it would only be necessary to tell him that *she* loved him and was weeping over his absence, and the next steamer would bring him back. Fool ! fool ! Why had I not cabled that to him ?

VII.

I WAS sitting in my office the next day thinking over the situation more calmly, and wondering if Arthur would go to the length of hiding himself and withholding his address, and thus fittingly crown his folly, when Jack rushed in in his breezy way, and sitting on the arm of my best chair, demanded to know what was up.

"My dear boy, every thing is up. Our hero and friend has turned out to be only a maniac after all, and no doubt by this time is safely lodged in an asylum."

"Say, will you tell me just what's happened, without any fooling? You must have heard something, for Alice is about half dead and she was all right until you came last night. Go ahead, out with it."

"He sent a telegram saying he would never come back; that's all."

"The devil he did!" Jack's face was as blank as if his eyebrows had been wanting.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"That is what I have been asking myself for the past twenty-four hours."

"I know," he exclaimed; "write to him that

she is all broken up about him ; I guess that'll fetch him."

"There is a slight difficulty in the way of your ingenious proposition."

He detected the facetiousness and was indignant.

"Now, look here, if you don't like my plans, why don't you invent some yourself?"

"Don't fire up so, I didn't mean to laugh at you ; but I am so disgusted with Arthur that I am not in the best of humors. The first thing I thought of was to write to him, but I do not know where a letter would reach him, and the only hope now is that he will write to me giving his address."

"Does Miss Brainard seem to regret Arthur's absence?" I asked, with the view of drawing him out and learning all I could of this most peculiar situation. It was not so strange that he had gone suddenly, for he was not apt to deliberate long when once the notion of doing any thing had occurred to him ; he was essentially a man of action, and he did not always count the consequences. I must know all the phases of the present status of affairs, and needed all the light that the actions or words of the parties immediately interested could throw upon the mystery ; he was beyond the reach of questions, but she remained, and perhaps there was something of which she was

cognizant, which would lead my ideas into a new channel, so I put that question to him.

“Well, I should say she did. He must be awful weak to run away from a girl like that, and he is the first man that ever had any chance with her; she has always had dozens of men hanging around, too. You needn’t smile. I’m awful young, I know, but I’ve had experience, and my opinion is worth listening to. If you won’t say a word about it, I’ll tell you something.” I was amused at the shame-faced earnestness of the boy, but I was careful not to betray the least suspicion of a smile, which I knew would wound him, so I said I would be as uncommunicative as the sphinx.

“Well,” he began, with his eyes on the map of “New York City and Vicinity” above my desk, “when I told you the other day about Purvie’s sister, I didn’t tell you about the other sister, did I?” He blushed so red, his eyes looked quite pale. “Well, now this is a secret, mind—say you wish you may die if you tell.” I subscribed to the oath, and he continued, hitching nervously in his chair and speaking in a husky stage whisper, “She’s a stunner and her name’s Julie, and I talked to her all the way to Jersey City, and don’t you say anything, but when I go back to school, I’m going to tell aunt it begins two days before it really does, you know, and I’m going to stay

in Philadelphia and take her around to the theater and out to Fairmount Park. How's that for a scheme?"

I thought my additional years demanded that I should reprove this too ambitious young adventurer, so I assumed my most judicial look and said,

"I did not think you would deliberately deceive your aunt and visit a young lady without her knowledge or permission."

He looked at me indignantly for a second, and then he said commiseratingly, and with the most jaunty air of studied impudence,

"Poor thing! where did it learn to preach so nicely? Say, look here, you can't play that on me, you know; if you could get a pretty girl on a string, you wouldn't go to see her I suppose, oh, no!" and he grinned until I thought his ears would permanently remain at the back of his head. I might as well not attempt the task of transforming him into the good boy of the religious tale, and I gave over trying, and asked him out to luncheon instead. I raised him to the seventh heaven of delight by suggesting that we should go to the Broad Street Delmonico's and "open a small bottle." At the table he said if he only could have a seat in "the board" and eat there every day, he would be perfectly happy. "Even without the younger Miss Purvie?" I asked.

"Oh, pshaw!" said he, getting rosy again, "let up, will you?"

Some one called my name and I looked up. Purvie was standing at the bar opposite, and as he caught my eye beckoned me to join him. I declined, and in a moment he left the rather dissipated-looking man he was with, and came over to our table. "Deucedly fine weather, isn't it?" Taking a chair from a neighboring table, he seated himself and asked if I knew the individual he had just parted from. "No? really you surprise me. Why, that's Kenwith," and he paused to observe how startled I would appear, but I was quite unmoved. "I suppose I am ignorant, but I never heard of him."

"Is it possible?" This time with impressive emphasis. "Why, that's the man that broke Lake Shore ten points in two hours."

"Ah!" was all I could say; my knowledge of the subject was extremely limited, and this was a safe remark at any rate.

"Yes," he continued, "but he's a bull now, one of the most rampant kind, and he is always dead right, don't you know—he never loses—he's got a lot of matched orders in there now, and he just told me the market was a safe purchase for a plucky man, for at least five points, and it's bound eventually to go up with a rush that will make all the bears climb."

All this was about as intelligible to me as so

much Sanscrit, and I began to feel nervous. His manner indicated a desire to make me listen to him, and I knew the man well enough to be convinced he would not talk so persistently on a subject he was aware I took no interest in, if he had not some ulterior object. He leaned over and said in a confidential undertone, "I'm in there pretty heavily, and I expect to make a big lot of money before the end of the week, but I find myself in a ridiculous position," and he laughed, or tried to, but there was not a shade of merriment in it; it was like a spasmodic cackle, and it grated on my nerves. I remained silent, waiting for him to explain himself. I had a strong presentiment of what was coming, but I wouldn't meet it half way; I would let him do it all.

"The fact is," said he, as he edged nearer to me, and now he was *very* confidential, and I knew I was right; they all begin in that way; "the fact is, I have put all my available funds into Kenwith's hands, and he invested it just the same as he has his own money, and I am absolutely certain to make a good thing out of it, only that unexpected frost out in Iowa, ten days ago, gave the bears an unusual opportunity, and they have gained a temporary control of the market; but it's only temporary, mind; it *can't* last, you understand; the reaction is sure to come, if not to-day, to-morrow morning

at the latest. But, in the meantime, it's absurd you know, he says he must have more margin ; there is over one per cent. left, and that won't be wiped out, but he declares he can not take the risk of a sudden drop which is just barely possible ; and if I don't send him 'five thou.' by two o'clock to-day, he will have to sell me out. Now, it's only a mere matter of form, dear old boy, and I don't suppose you'd object to doing me this little favor just for a day or two, at the most, you know. I'll give you two per cent. for the use of the money."

The cool impudence of this proposition, and the fellow's suddenly assumed familiarity, were disgusting, and, for the first time, I felt utter contempt for him. I said coldly, "When I loan money it is upon ample security ; I certainly shall not risk any of it in Wall Street."

The attempt at a smile faded from his face, and he rose with a dejected air ; all his brisk debonair manner was gone in an instant. He walked away, saying, "Oh ! well, just as you like."

There was a great noise about us of talking and clicking of glasses, and the taps of heels on the marble floor and the calling out of orders by the waiters behind the counter, as there always is there at half-past twelve, and the din prevented Jack from hearing all our conversation ; but he had caught the drift of it, and when

Purvie had gone he expressed intense surprise that a man who was generally believed to be so rich should want to borrow money. "I wish Alice wouldn't let him come to the house so much, I never took any stock in him."

"After all, Jack, he doesn't do any harm, and I have an idea he amuses your cousin."

If I could have had a little of the future revealed to me then, I might have revised my opinion of Mr. Purvie.

Few men can experience hope and fear, and satisfaction and disappointment, and the other emotions which constitute what we call life, and survive them all until the age of thirty-two, without having learned to be more or less patient when the ordering of events does not seem to be in accord with common justice. But I chafed and fretted like a disappointed child when day after day went by and no letter came from Arthur. If he had made up his mind that his own country could not hold him, why not write and state the reason? I could not recall a single instance when we had endeavored to conceal any thing from the knowledge of each other, and I would not forgive this lack of confidence in me. If he did not choose to do the sensible thing, I would not worry about it any longer. I had already worked myself up about his confounded disappearance until I was on the verge of nervous prostration, and now,

if he did not choose to come back, I would worry no longer about it; he could go to the devil for all I cared. I had set my hopes upon him, and he had turned out just the same as all the other promising things I had ever taken any interest in—they had all gone wrong after a while, and so, finally, had he.

So, with such reflections, I settled the matter for good and all, resolving never to return to it again, and I did not—for possibly a full hour. I was restless; my life was substantially the same; I did the same things, went to the same places, saw the same people, but something was wanting; it was a sense of incompleteness that I could not drive away, or kill, or hide from.

I had not been to the Brainards' in some days, and Jack had not been to see me; so, as much from a sense of duty as from any anticipation of passing an agreeable evening, I betook myself to their residence. I had no news to bring, but I would go and pretend I expected some from day to day.

Mrs. Brainard was at home and in a few moments she came down: she greeted me pleasantly, and after a little unimportant conversation, she asked if I had heard from my friend.

"No, he is as silent as the tomb, and I have given up thinking of him."

"I wish I could;" and then she said gravely, and with a troubled face, "I would give any thing in my power if Alice could forget him. I feel that I must speak frankly to you: your friend has done us an irreparable injury, whether intentionally or not I can not say; but he will wreck my daughter's life if he adheres to his inconsiderate determination not to return. I can not find the charity in my heart that would excuse him." Her lip quivered and her voice was unsteady. From my soul I pitied her. But what could I say? Any sympathy from me would fall flat; it would be too cheap and mean to offer a woman whose home my dearest friend had darkened. I could only reiterate the old story of my unbounded faith in him and my reliance upon his honor, which would in the end impel him to act the manly part, and so on; and I was so tired of saying this thing to myself over and over again, as I had been doing constantly, that when I repeated it to Mrs. Brainard it did not sound to me like the truth and I had a consciousness of trying to deceive her. I no longer believed it myself. She listened to it all politely, impassively, but I easily saw it made no impression. I went away with the conviction that my visit had been a failure.

What with Jack's visits to me, either at my office or at the club, and the evenings I spent

at rare intervals at the Brainards', I kept myself informed as to the position of affairs; but there naturally was nothing of a nature to put a better face upon the situation, which, through the continued silence of the runaway, must necessarily remain *in statu quo*. But I, being in that frame of mind which, through intensity of longing, defeats the reason and deludes the wisest of us into the belief that what is impossible *might* occur, still cherished a faint, half mentally acknowledged hope, that by some extraordinary means they might have received tidings of him; so, when I went there I always experienced a little of that fluttering expectancy that comes before the conclusion of a test.

In all the conversations I had had with Alice, she let fall no syllable of regret that he had gone. After that interview in which she had involuntarily betrayed her secret, her manner had gone back to the old self-possessed, well poised calm, but there was a difference, and I thought I perceived that it existed in the absence of a degree of the light-hearted, indifferent gayety which had been one of her most charming attributes; it was replaced by a shade of cynicism, just enough to suggest that she had found the past a little disappointing. This attempt at an analysis occurred to me because I looked for some change and observed

her closely. Her disposition had been even, but now she was inclined to moods. I understood her nature partially, and was confident that in the end, probably after a long time, her pride would cure the wound, or at least help her to hide it from herself, until it should be forgotten, but I prayed that it might not happen before Arthur had returned. Her great love for him would transcend all other emotions until one day the sense of injured self-esteem would for an instant silence the voice of the heart, and in that flash of realization of the humiliating position in which he had wantonly placed her, he would forever lose all chance of again awakening in her one throb of affection, and she would be as surely lost to him as if the grave had claimed her.

So the days and weeks went by, the leaves had turned to crimson, the trees had again become skeletons, the snow had come, and still no word from Arthur. Long ago I had gone to his bankers' and asked for his address, but they insisted they did not know it; he had taken out no letter of credit from them, but he was well known to their agents in London and had drawn some money there; probably *they* could give me the information which they were really extremely sorry they could not furnish.

My letter to the people in London had elicited the reply that he had been there but once,

had taken out a letter of credit, and had told them that if any letters came for him, they were to be sent at once to his office in New York.

His precautions were as well taken as those of a defaulter whose liberty depends upon his safe concealment.

Jack was thoroughly in his cousin's confidence and he very often obligingly, though treacherously, betrayed it to me. She would give way to long and bitter crying spells, and when detected would turn upon him in anger, a thing so unusual in her, that, as he remarked astutely, it showed from how deep a well her tears had sprung.

One cold blustering evening in January, I had returned to the club in the worst of humors, having bored myself for two mortal hours at a "crush" uptown, and was sitting in front of the fire endeavoring to thaw out my feet, and was deep in the old problem, varying my idle speculations as to his whereabouts by childishly wishing he would come back before it was too late, when chancing to glance toward the door of the reading room, I saw Purvie coming in. He looked well to-night; he was in evening dress, the cut and droop of his mustache were perfect, and his face was flushed either with satisfaction or wine. A well-looking fellow, thought I, and at first sight, attractive; but he doesn't wear; no, I had seen a

great deal of him lately and decidedly he did not wear well. I had finally grown to dislike him so intensely, that I was uneasy in his society and felt too annoyed by his mere presence to talk to him ; he must have been aware of the antipathy I felt for him, but for some reason he pretended to be oblivious to it.

He seated himself in a big arm chair, and taking a paper out of his pocket began to read. I presume I had been sitting there about five minutes longer, lazily trying to determine whether he was a weak knave or a brainless fop, when he startled me by calling my name quickly and in a surprised tone.

"Hello," said I, turning toward him, "what is it?"

"Why, just look here, by Jove ! You know you must have known of this."

He rose and coming over to me handed me a copy of the "Home Journal," directing my attention with his finger to a little paragraph headed "From our London correspondent."

"The engagement has been officially announced of Miss Gladys Amelia, second daughter of Sir Edward Jolkey, Bart., M. P., of 'The Cedars,' Bartwell, Warwickshire, to Mr. Arthur Wardwell, a distinguished barrister of New York. The wedding is to take place within three weeks, as the ill health of the young lady's father necessitates his going abroad for

some months, and it is his desire that the marriage should be solemnized prior to his departure. It is whispered that the honeymoon will be spent in Italy, and that the happy couple on their return, will make their home permanently in England, as the prospective groom, it is understood, prefers this country to his own."

This was the explanation! The fool! The shallow-brained hypocrite! I had known him all these years and had credited him with every manly, chivalrous quality, and now I learn, as in a flash, that he is after all worse than weak. The fair structure of pride in him, built by long and close companionship, demolished by his own rash act. Never in all my life had my heart been so torn. Oh! the sickening, sinking feeling, that stole all my strength and made my brain throb with the sudden conviction that never as long as we should live, could I call him friend again; the overwhelming sense of utter disappointment was the bitterest trial I had ever known. No thought of Alice and the grief this unexpected news would cause her, was in my mind then. I did not think, I could not reason, I could only feel the leaden weight of the terrible loss. The only human creature who had stirred the depths of my affection was worse than dead, for I could trust him no more. Now, at last, the end was here, the worst had been told, and the

sun which had risen in such a radiant burst of splendid promise, had sunk forever behind the mists of willful failure.

It was not that he had gone to England, leaving a girl who he lyingly said had all his heart could give; he might have been easily forgiven that piece of folly, for he was not aware she was even interested in him; but it was his fickleness, his treachery, his lack of manly stability and singleness of purpose that forced upon me the truth that henceforth we must be as strangers.

Perhaps the most bitter emotion it is given to man to feel is the sudden realization that all his most cherished convictions are utterly false, and the things which he has held all his life to be the most sacred truths are but baseless myths: it wounds his self esteem, it weakens or destroys his faith.

All in an instant I was brought face to face with the wreck of the past, and the blank darkness of the future. He was lost to me utterly, and in the days that would come I must learn the way to live without him.

Purvie's voice recalled me to myself.

"You seem to be a good bit done up by this news: didn't you know any thing of it?"

When I looked up he was smiling. The wrath that was in me would find a vent presently, and I might forget myself and quarrel with

him, I had better go; I got up and walked out of the room, and putting on my coat and hat went out again.

As I walked slowly along half conscious of the soft noiseless fall of the snow, my thoughts at length forsook my own irreparable loss and I found myself wondering how Alice would take it—bravely, perhaps indignantly; and proudly, I was sure; would she get over it? Yes, or she would compel herself to think she had. But what would she do? Sit tamely down and simply relapse into the old peaceful life she had known before she met him? No, I thought not. Hers was the sort of nature that in an emergency like this, would seek relief in action, but in what direction? Time would tell.

This Englishwoman he was marrying could not be her peer in any respect, save that of station, and that was nothing. What had, what could have, made him do this thing? I would never know, for he would not have the hardihood to write to me after what he had done.

Pretty soon I looked up; the flakes, like showers of glittering diamonds, were rushing past the electric lights, and I realized that my feet were wet and I was far from home. I hailed a cab and went back to pass a troubled, restless night, and awoke in the morning feeling old and worn.

VIII.

JACK came to my office that afternoon. He was not looking himself at all; the brightness, the sparkle, were all gone; he was serious, consequently something unusual had happened; he shook hands gravely and seated himself with a distinct sigh; he opened the conversation by inquiring impressively,

“Have you seen the ‘Home Journal’ this week?”

Yes, I said I had seen it; where had he run across it?

A copy had been mailed to Alice, it had arrived while they were at dinner; she had read it and had fainted. While they were trying to bring her to, his aunt told him the inclination to faint was hereditary in the family—she did it herself when she was young. When she was restored to consciousness, Jack had taken up the paper and the paragraph at once caught his eye; it had been obligingly marked by some one who had sent it. This aroused my interest, and I asked him, “Do you not take that paper regularly at the house?”

“No.”

Then some one must have sent it who was aware of your cousin's interest in Arthur, and it could only be some one to whose advantage it would be to have her informed of the fact that he had forgotten her and was about to marry another woman. Now, who was sufficiently interested in either party to go to the trouble, or who knew the circumstances beside myself? The only man who could by any possibility have divined the situation of affairs was Purvie. But was he interested? Yes, decidedly, he had had, and probably still cherished hopes in that quarter, and the preference shown to Arthur was the great obstacle to the advancement of his own affair. He was undoubtedly the man, and this announcement in print was a God-send to him. If he had mailed her the paper so that it came into her hands before he saw me at the club, all that surprise must have been only a clever piece of acting and he was deeper than I had thought him. Worse things might be forgiven a man who had lost his head over such a woman, but sending her the paper was not in the best of taste. Why had he tried the effect of the notice on me, pretending he had not seen it before? I could not explain that.

"What is the use of talking about it at all?" said I impatiently; "we only run up against a blind wall whenever we try to see our way

clear in thinking it over, and we are just where we started from. All that can be said, is that he has gone and we don't want ever again to see him or hear from him."

"What!" he exclaimed, sharply, "you mean to say you don't want to see him again? Oh, pshaw! You're joking."

He wasn't sure whether I was indulging in an ill-timed jest until I told him how strongly I felt, but he could not seem to comprehend it.

"Why, what has he done? I don't see he is to blame at all—he was foolish in running away, but the very reason he did that was because he thought Alice didn't care a cent for him. Good Lord, he hasn't done any thing so very horrible. Of course, Alice is all broken up, but he don't know that, and he has a right to marry any one he likes. I s'pose she'll get over it after a while. I'm awful sorry it didn't come to any thing though, 'cause I'd like to have him in the family."

Was this boy's view more sensible than mine? From his standpoint, Arthur was not inexcusably culpable; but to put the most lenient construction upon the affair, he was deplorably wanting in constancy. What I complained of was that he had destroyed my illusions, and had rendered it impossible for me any longer to look up to or admire him. He who had been my hero, could not fill any less exalted

place in my future, and I would prefer to remember him as he had been than to try to place him in a new niche as an acquaintance. I explained this feeling to Jack and he remarked without an attempt at being complimentary, that it was all "rot."

"Ah! Jack, I had thought better of you—you are copying Mr. Purvie—that word is one of his favorites."

He was indignant.

"Copy him! I'd as soon copy the devil. I hate that fellow, and now I suppose he'll be hanging around more than ever; there's no chance for him, though."

I am not so certain of that. A woman scorned sometimes plunges into some rash and unexpected action to escape the commiseration of her friends, as the gambler nonchalantly tosses his last dollar on the table, though he knows the loss of it means utter ruin.

"By the way, have you seen any thing more of the younger Miss Purvie?"

No, he hadn't, and the deuce of it was, it had been decided he was to enter college; that was the reason he was still in the city, and he didn't see how he was going to find an excuse for going to Philadelphia to see her—things always had to happen that way with him, he never had any luck, and it was too bad after he had gotten up that splendid scheme, too.

Jack was still bewailing his fate, when the door opened and Mr. Philo. D. Purvie walked in as smiling and brisk and altogether charming as if there was not in all the world such a thing as trouble or a shrunken bank account or any thing at all unpleasant. If he could have dropped his accent and a little of the elegant veneer that could not be mistaken for any thing *but* veneer, I believe I should really have felt cheered by his delightful cordiality.

"Wouldn't disturb you for the world, you know; if you and Jack are talking business, I'll go into the outer office and wait. Lots of time, don't you know."

He annoyed me by pretending to think Jack and I were talking business. I couldn't bear his uncalled for useless insincerity, it made me suspicious of him.

"No, no, sit down. Jack, you will excuse me for a little while, won't you? Come back at one and we'll go out to lunch."

His reply was not elegant, but it was expressive; he said, "You bet I'll be on time."

Purvie's overdone urbanity made me uneasy. I was beginning to be a little afraid of this plausible, oily dandy; I wanted nothing to do with a man who could not express a downright conviction to save his life. I was certain he had come to borrow money—but I was mistaken.

"I want to see you," he drawled, "on a professional matter. There's rather a nice point of law involved and I want your opinion—no, thanks, I don't smoke, but I enjoy the aroma awf'ly."

I knew he lied, but I lighted my cigar, nevertheless, and resigned myself to listening to his story, if he had one. "State your case."

"Oh! it isn't my case," he said, hurriedly—he seemed confused and eagerly anxious to get through with this interview; and he went on in such a precipitate way that I gathered he was trying to get over the worst of it, and I was, consequently, prepared to disbelieve him when he said:

"A friend of mine has put himself in a peculiar position, and he is afraid of having trouble. I told him I knew a good fellow who was well up in all legal technicalities, quite eminent in his profession, don't you know, and I would get his opinion for him."

This lame attempt at flattery, and the display of well kept teeth, were intended to be propitiatory, but I had known him too long to be taken in; he wanted something of me or he never would have gone to the trouble to make himself so confoundedly agreeable.

"It's an awkward sort of thing to tell you—he made a fool of himself when he was two or three years younger; he was out in Chicago,

living there for a time, and became intimate with some men in the Junior Occidental Club, rather a fast set, you know. One night they took a box at McVicker's: it was a spectacular piece, lots of calcium light, and flary scenery, and pink tights and all that, and in the second act there was a sparkling grotto, and a girl came on who was billed as a 'Première Danseuse.' She was not a remarkable dancer, but she was deucedly handsome, and my friend was sufficiently sober and interested to feel a desire to know her. He had plenty of money at that time, and the next day he had made the biggest and most expensive basket of flowers the florist could get up, in the middle of it he placed a carefully worded note, respectfully asking for the honor of her acquaintance, and in the scene where she executed her 'pas seul,' it was handed up to her by two ushers. Well, *cela va sans dire* that the reply was favorable; a man who could purchase such mountains of roses in the dead of winter, could undoubtedly pay for a lot of jewelry. He found her not only very beautiful, but, strange to say, intelligent and well informed. She was a French woman, but spoke English fairly. At his earnest solicitation she left the stage, and from that time to this, has never hinted at any desire to return to it, and their relations have been of the pleasantest description; *but*, he is thinking of mar-

rying in his own circle, and this ex-ballet-dancer is an obstacle; she is of a jealous disposition and he is afraid she will finally make trouble. Now this is the point I have been getting at; he has been indiscreet enough to register himself and her, at various hotels, as man and wife, but under an assumed name, except in one instance. I want you to tell me if she could make any claim on him?" So, with many pauses and much shuffling hesitation, he told his story. He leaned forward and looked at me anxiously.

"Yes," I said, "she could make trouble, but money is generally a powerful argument with that class of women; has your friend thought of that?"

"Yes; but where is the use of his thinking about it when it is nearly all gone?"

"What does he intend to marry on, then?"

"Oh! the girl has lots of dollars, don't you know?"

I said, with a touch of scorn I did not care to conceal, "If that is the kind of man he is, the dancer is good enough for him."

He turned his eyes quickly toward me with an angry glance, but thought better of it, and with a shiver-inviting smile, rose and thanked me "awfully" and went softly out.

It suddenly occurred to me that he had been discussing his own affair; but who was the girl

he was about to marry? If he entertained any hopes of making Alice Brainard his wife, he would be disagreeably undeceived. If he had been recounting his own experience, where was this woman? My prejudice against the fellow had made me too harsh in my conclusions—perhaps he had really told the truth. At any rate, it would be only ordinary charity to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Two days afterward, a letter came from Arthur. He is prompt, I thought bitterly, as I tore open the envelope, almost as prompt with his bad news as the society correspondent. His note, it could hardly be called a letter, was brief and just indefinitely self-accusatory enough to show me how absurd had been my hope that perhaps even yet it might not be too late; this was what he had written.

“VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT.

“VAN, MY DEAR OLD FRIEND.—I write you this brief line to let you know that I am physically well, but my mental condition I fear would not stand the scrutiny of a commission *de lunatico inquirendo*. Since my abrupt departure from home, existence has been so great a curse to me that at times had I been more cowardly or less sane, I should have taken the short road in the hope of making a greater success of my life in some other world than I have done here,

“My brain, my heart is so full of a despair that clouds all my surroundings, that heretofore, when I have thought of you, it has been impossible for me to write coherently ; and even now, I am not equal to the task of telling you why I took this step without a word even to you. But, probably, by this time you have been told or divined the reason and appreciate the fact that, under the circumstances, I could not remain in New York. Had I staid near *her* longer, I could not have torn myself away ; I beg of you when you write not to mention *her* name, the regret is still too sharp and I must try not to think of her—I could not in honor cherish that remembrance, for regrets might prove dangerous, and I am not as strong as I had thought. This is not cheerful reading for any one, but I know you will understand I could not just yet write you any thing different, and you^d were always such a good old fellow, I am sure you pity me. Write me a long letter about yourself ; if you address me, care of Royal Hotel, Blackfriars Bridge, London, the letter will be forwarded to me.

“ARTHUR.”

Pity him ! Yes, I gave him the same compassion I would bestow on any weak, miserable creature who had gone wrong ; the long wished for letter had arrived and it simply confirmed

the worst I had known. Of course, he "could not in honor cherish that remembrance" now that he was about to marry another woman; he might have spared himself the task of writing that platitude. Precious little good it would do him now, ever to think of Alice again. How guiltily lame the phrasing of the whole miserable note was! How was it possible that one of God's most brilliant creations could sink so low? I should have thought better of him had he always left me in ignorance of his whereabouts; his cringing bid for sympathy was just one touch beyond the finish.

IX.

I WAS sitting in my favorite seat by the fire, trying to think of some sort of diversion that would serve to turn my thoughts into a more cheerful channel, when the name Purvie, pronounced in an audible tone, caught my attention. I glanced round and recognized two of my acquaintances, young men about town, earnestly engaged in conversation. One of them, De Grote, chancing to look toward me, saw my inquiring glance, nodded, and said :

“ We were just talking of a friend of yours, Purvie, you know. Have you heard of his hard luck in the street ? ”

“ No, has he been speculating again ? ” I wasn't much interested.

“ Again ! Why, he's always been at it as long as I've known him, and every time he loses heavily, he says he has gained wisdom from experience ; he sees the weak point in his theory, and will try the right system next time. ”

“ But does he never make money ? ”

“ Oh, yes, sometimes ; he must occasionally strike right, you know, but he takes one or two points profit, and five or ten points loss like the

rest of the lambs, but he is so badly shorn this time, I don't think the wool will grow again; he went in heavily with his friend Kenwith, and dropped all the money he had, and all he could borrow, too."

"You astonish me. I thought he was a rich man."

"He was a year ago, but fighting the tiger is an expensive amusement, and generally cleans a man out in the end."

"How will he get along? Has his sister any money?"

De Grote looked surprised. "He has no sister," said he, positively.

"Pardon me, I am quite certain—"

"No, you have been misinformed. I knew the family when they lived in Cincinnati; the father died four years ago, and there was only this son left. All the money went to him, and he has made the fur fly ever since he got possession of the property."

"I thought he had two sisters; tell me, has he no relatives living in Philadelphia?"

"No, he has not; he goes there often, and has an extensive acquaintance, but no relatives. I hear he is very intimate at the Brainards'; is it true?"

"I believe he is there a good deal."

De Grote came and sat down near me, and said, confidentially, "I am sorry to hear it, for

the slight acquaintance I have with Miss Brainard, makes me believe that a marriage with that fellow would be a decided *mésalliance*; she is much too good for him. As long as the money lasts he is about as fast as they make them. He owes money to every other man in the club."

I did not reply, and, after a pause, he said:

"What do you say to a little game of poker?"

"No, thanks, I don't feel in the humor this evening."

So Purvie was ruined; well, he would probably now live on his wits, or the lack of them, to be precise. I do not know why I detested the fellow so heartily at that time; I had no substantial grounds for my dislike. It was instinctive; I had grown to hate the sight of him. Those women Jack had seen with him were not his sisters, after all; it was a foolish, inconsiderate thing to introduce creatures of that stamp to so young a boy—he ought to be ashamed of himself. I must see to it that Jack did not meet the girl again.

Decidedly, I mused as I walked slowly up stairs to enjoy a smoke and watch the card-playing, decidedly the acquaintance Arthur suddenly formed with this family has wrought pleasant results; it has sent him to England, put an end to our friendship, caused me a lot of trouble and worry, and now there was a pros-

pect before me of more anxiety in the effort to keep Jack away from that woman ; I must do that, for I liked Jack ; I usually fought shy of forming new friendships, but I was irresistibly drawn to the boy. In one of the small rooms I found a poker party just beginning the game ; the players were De Grote, Farnstead, a horsey young man who was fond of recounting his exploits in the saddle in the exciting chase after the anise-seed bag, and Purvie, whose presence I wondered at, for his financial condition hardly warranted the risk of a battle with an antagonist like De Grote, who was known to play a pretty stiff game. "What is the limit?" I asked.

"A miserable little game," Farnstead said, with an air of bravado, "only five dollars ; when I play poker, I like to make it something worth while."

"It is possible to lose a dollar or two, even with that limit," I suggested.

"Won't you come in and make it more interesting?"

"No," said I, "I'm going out in a few minutes."

The light glistened on Purvie's teeth as he remarked : "It's useless to ask him to play ; he doesn't believe it's good form to invest money in gambling."

I knew to what he referred, and realized that

a sarcastic allusion to my refusal to loan him money was intended.

I caught his eye and replied, "I do not throw my money away in wildcat speculations, nor do I gamble with other people's money."

He got red in the face, but had not the spirit to resent it, and only said, quite meekly and with a catch in his breath that was a caricature of a laugh, "No, of course not—of course not; that is what I meant."

Fortune is said to be fickle, but I have always observed that when a man has earned the reputation of being unlucky, nothing he may turn his hand to results in profit; and so it proved with him. When there were only a few dollars at stake he would win, and whenever he held a very strong hand the others would be so weak that his first bet would be called; but let the betting run high, and if he held a "full hand" his opponent would have four of a kind.

The game was slow. I began to yawn and only remained because I knew of nothing better to do. No interesting features marked its dull monotony; the luck all ran in one direction, and the evening's amusement, unless the tide turned and ran back like a mill race, would be a ruinously expensive one for Purvie; his high spirits subsided; his flippancy gave place to an eager taciturnity; he greedily watched

the play of his opponents, and when neither caution nor bluffing availed against the continued superiority of their cards, he lost heart, and where grit would have saved him, he would weakly refuse to risk his money. It was at this stage of the game that he began to drink. By and by the battle waxed hotter and the betting grew heavy; the "ante," which had commenced at a modest half dollar, was changed to a dollar, and then to two, and finally, the aggravating persistence of his losses made Purvie desperate, and he inaugurated a five dollar Jack pot.

If you know any thing about poker, you must be aware that such a game should be participated in only by those who have large sums which they are at a loss how to dispose of, but prudential calculations did not enter into his reckless play; he had lost heavily, and the feverish hope, common to all gamblers, that he could retrieve his losses by one brilliant *coup*, had made him utterly indifferent to consequences. From time to time he told the waiter to bring him some brandy, until he had arrived at a state of drunken, nerveless stupefaction. He never took his eyes from the table—he saw nothing, knew nothing, realized nothing, except that there was a chance that he might win something back.

Round after round was dealt and no one could "open the pot," until at last he had the neces-

sary cards and opened it for the limit. "Hold on," he said, as the others were about to deposit their chips; he was leaning on the table, gazing unsteadily at the pile of little round pieces of blue ivory, his eyes blood-shot, his face red and perspiring, his hair disordered, and looking altogether a most repulsive object. "Hold on, I wan' know if you think it's square 'shake' t'have the limit same's ante in er Jack pot?"

"I am willing to raise it," said De Grote; "what do you say, Farnstead?"

"It makes no difference to me, he's the loser."

"Well, how much do you want to make it?" De Grote asked, turning to Purvie.

"How would a quar' of century strike you?"

The proposition was agreed to; they each placed the chips representing twenty-five dollars in the center of the table, and Purvie said, with a cunning leer, he did not want any cards, he would "stand pat;" the others each took three; then Purvie, with a queer look in his face and a loud voice, said, "I'll bet the limit." His companions both laid down their hands. The winner grasped the pile of chips with one hand and with his cards in the other reached for the remainder of the pack.

"Wait a minute," said De Grote, quietly,

taking up the undealt cards, and keeping his gaze intently upon Purvie's countenance, "let's see what you opened it on."

"No, sir! that isn't necessary, you ought to've paid for a sight of 'em."

De Grote said, with his eye still riveted on the other's face, his jaw looking very square and determined, the lips slightly drawn back, "Farnstead, get up and shut the door. Now," he muttered, through his clenched teeth, "show up those cards."

Purvie changed from red to sickly white and his lips trembled, "I don't understand you, sir. This is a most remarkable proceeding! What do you mean, sir?"

We were all standing around the table now. De Grote put both hands on it and leaned over until he was close to the other's face; he said, "I'll tell you what I mean, I mean to see those cards, and I have closed the door, so that if there is to be a scene, there shall be no scandal; now then, put them down, or, by God! I'll make you."

Purvie uttered not a word, but placed the cards on the edge of the table. Farnstead turned them over: there was not even a pair in the hand.

"Mr. Purvie," said De Grote, slowly and distinctly, "for the honor of the club, I shall keep this little affair a secret, and I think I can

answer for these other gentlemen, but as far as I am concerned, I do not wish to know you in the future."

Purvie sneaked quietly out, and as he passed me I thought I had never seen a meaner, more hang-dog look in any human being's face; he did not look up or pause or utter a word; he had taken the galling chastisement silently and with the air of having deserved it. Farnstead's ejaculation aptly described him. As the door closed upon him, he said, "Contemptible cur!"

If my memory serves me, it was the next day that a note came from Miss Brainard inviting me to a German she was to give the following week; it was prettily worded, but was written in the abominable angular hand, the unworthy successor of the old round chirography which at least had the merit of legibility. I puzzled it out and decided to accept. Then I resumed my unpleasant task of writing to Arthur. I was in a dilemma, not knowing how, under the circumstances, I ought to address him; I could not commence with any cordial term such as "My dear Arthur," or "Dear old man," or even "My dear old friend," and to write "Arthur Wardwell, Esq." would be pretentiously weak. After I had worried myself into a fever, I had recourse to the comforter that never had failed me—a good cigar. I opened the drawer in my

desk where I kept them and took up a box of "Reinas." I selected one, and then it occurred to me that Arthur had given them to me. There was quite a little story connected with that hundred cigars. We had been walking up Broadway one day in early June and had reached the slight bend where Grace Church stands, when we were stopped by a crowd of idlers and the morbidly curious who were following a policeman and his prisoner. It so happened that as we reached the curb the culprit passed directly in front of us.

Arthur said, "I know that man; he was concerned in a bare-faced swindle, which first and last cost me two or three thousands." Then he related the circumstances.

It seems, the man, who at that time was not only presentable but had the outward polish of a gentleman, had called on him with letters of introduction which afterward proved to be forged, and had induced him to invest in the stock of a grain elevator existing only in the imagination of the swindler. In the course of the negotiations it was necessary that Arthur should go to the fellow's apartments to inspect certain plans, and he became acquainted with the wife, a refined woman with two beautiful, fair haired children; he had been deeply impressed with the air of contentment and happiness that appeared to pervade

the home, and decided that he must be one of the few fortunate ones who had hit upon a congenial companion. Well, the scheme turned out to be one of the old threadbare sort of swindles, and after he had paid his money the man disappeared and he had not seen him from that day to this; and here he was apprehended at last and being taken like a common thief to the station. He was a most miserable object; his clothes, once of a fashionable cut, were faded and patched, the trowsers were frayed at the edges, and the coat was confined close about his neck by a pin, probably to conceal the absence of a shirt; his hat—well his hat was beyond description—he was the incarnation of misery. He had a wild, hunted look in his face, and was altogether such a man as I would not care to have any dealings with except at a respectful distance.

Arthur elbowed his way through the crowd and spoke to him; the man's face took on a fresh accession of terror, but my friend whispered something and he looked up with parted, trembling lips for an instant and then ejaculated a fervent "God bless you!" In a moment more he passed out of sight with bowed head and shuffling gait. "What did you say to him?" I had inquired.

"I only asked for his address. I am going to try what you would call a Quixotic scheme;

I think there is a strain of honest feeling beneath his rascality, and I mean to see if I can't bring it to the surface."

"I advise you to attempt a more promising undertaking; nothing can be done with an old stager like that; he has 'jail bird' written all over him."

He laughed, "I knew you would ridicule me; still I shall try."

"If you are in earnest, I'll bet you the best box of cigars that can be bought, that you will fail."

"No, but if I succeed I'll send you one."

About a year and a half afterward, the man himself told me this story. He said that when Arthur had spoken to him that day when the law had finally secured him, he imagined it was to reproach him for the swindle, and he expected nothing less than a prosecution on that charge; so, when asked to give the address of his family, he had refused, and then Arthur gave him his word of honor that he intended to help them while he was in prison; and that was too much; he would have taken reproaches and threats as a matter of course, but that a man, and that man the one he had wronged, should voluntarily offer to take care of his helpless wife and children, was more than he could bear, and for the first time in many years his heart had been stirred with an emotion that

broke through the callous surface and drove to his eyes the unaccustomed tears.

“That man was like an angel from heaven to my poor wife and children; they were without food and there was nothing left that would buy enough to stop the baby’s crying, and my wife was ill and broken down with the hard work she had never been accustomed to, and he came in one morning and talked kindly to them and spoke cheerily to my boy of the good fortune I would meet with on the voyage I had taken, that he might not suspect the truth, and then he said I would often send them money I was earning. When he went away, he quietly placed in my wife’s hand an envelope containing what meant life and health and comfort to those poor starving creatures. Ah! you can’t know what it is to feel starving hungry, sir! *I* had brought them to it, and *he*, the man who ought to have cursed me and mine, fed and clothed them, until after twelve long months, I came out of prison, thank God! a different man. Look at me!” he went on excitedly, “I am decently clothed, I earn an honest living, I am no longer hunted like a wild beast, and what I am, and every thing I have—my home, my wife’s love and confidence, I owe to *him*; and I swear to you, if it were necessary, I would prove my gratitude by giving up my life for him.

So he told his story, striving often to choke back his emotion, and I recognized my friend in every action he described ; it revealed nothing new in his character to me.

The recollection led to others, and I sat there smoking and watching the hurrying masses of snow-laden clouds as they drove past the spire of old Trinity, and I did not write harshly to him as I had fully made up my mind to do. I hastily wrote this :

“ARTHUR:—I received your note to-day. Another would have had my scorn, *you* have my pity ; but you have common sense enough remaining to know that the old relations between us can never be resumed. I write you frankly, but not as bitterly as I feel—recollections of the old times prevent that. You say you suffer. I can not believe it. It was in your power to win the love of the woman whom you declared, times without number, had realized your ideal of feminine perfection, and of a sudden you cross the water and shortly find another whom you like so much better that you at once engage yourself to her. I would give all the gold in Wall Street to know that in my thoughts I have wronged you, to feel sure that you were the straightforward man I had always thought you. If by any remote possibility I may still be mistaken, or if it be not too late to undo the past, for God’s sake

come back! She is waiting, hopelessly waiting for you, as she will do all her life; but if you can not come with the same heart and in the same mind as when I last saw you, and if you can not come back *alone*, then I trust we may never meet again.

“Yours,

“VAN.”

That was not half as strong as I should make it, but, try as I might, I could not coldly disassociate him from my past. It was strange that I should still imagine there might spring up a light in all this darkness. It is not to be wondered at that I was morbidly sensitive in regard to his actions. My grief was not unnatural if you consider for a moment. Here was I, absolutely alone in the world, suddenly deprived of the constant companionship of a strong helpful nature, and compelled to rely solely upon my own resources. I had trusted him as the faithful trust in Providence, and he had never failed me, and had never been found wanting—he was my ideal without a flaw, and now I could trust him, believe in him, look up to him, no longer. I must change all my ways, live a new life—alone.

X.

THE evening of Miss Brainard's German found me walking up Fifth Avenue in a steamy fog, the effect of a sudden thaw ; the air was mild but seemed to have a perceptible taste and odor, not disagreeable, but suggestive to the initiated of sore throat and rheumatism. The yellow gas and the cold steely electric light shone out dimly from the center of round masses of vapor slowly drifting past on the faint breeze. The sodden banks of mud-bespattered snow piled in the gutters sent up clouds of vapor to mingle with the smoke of the horses ; even from the brown stone railings of the stoops the moisture seemed to ooze, and I reflected sourly that this sort of weather would make the affair I was going to a perspiring torture ; I was getting to be a confirmed grumbler.

When I reached the drawing room I mentally thanked heaven there was no crush, at any rate. Miss Brainard, I thought, had never looked so charming. I am sorry I can not describe her costume, but I know nothing of such mysteries ; it was pale greenish sort of stuff with a lot of

embroidery or something of that kind. Whatever it was, it became her, and she was exquisitely beautiful. I had not seen her since she had read the announcement of his engagement and I felt a little awkward, though I knew she would not allude to it. She was taking it so bravely, it was hard to believe that she was straining every fiber of her heart in the effort to smother the bitterest disappointment that ever comes to a woman.

Of course Purvie was there, looking little like the cheat who had played so despicable a part at the club the other evening: he was as correct and unruffled as ever; he was counting on the promise De Grote had made that the story of that game of poker should be kept a secret. I was indignant at the fellow when he coolly nodded and smiled at me: I "cut" him, and resolved to give Miss Brainard a hint of his character at the first opportunity; it was outrageous that a shallow-brained scamp like this should be received by her on so friendly a footing. I was now justified in interfering, and I determined to do so.

When we went down to supper, I was proudly conscious of having done my duty; I had struggled through several disjointed conversations consisting of petty society gossip and time honored platitudes with an occasional attempt at a smart epigram, and if I had

amused my partners I deserved credit, for the effort had bored me horribly.

As Purvie stood in front of Miss Brainard, he frequently bent down and spoke earnestly to her, but the eternal smile was lacking; I saw her once or twice lower her eyes, and the color came into her face; it was something of a very confidential nature, and his bearing was deferential enough to be tender. I did not like it, and my decision to speak to her about him was strengthened. My interference might be thought presumptuous, but I would risk the loss of her friendship to warn her against him.

I went up stairs for a smoke; there was no one in the room and I settled myself for a few moments of quiet; through the open door the faint strains of the music down stairs came floating in, the air was heavy and hot, the chair was deep and comfortable, and I was basking beneath the glare from the big chandelier and feeling thoroughly at ease, when my evil genius sent Purvie into the room. I struggled hastily to my feet, dropped my cigar, and went out in no amiable frame of mind.

At the foot of the first flight of stairs was Miss Brainard.

"You must have turned recluse," she said, "we have seen nothing of you for a perfect age."

She was in her happiest mood, her eyes sparkled, and her manner was almost bantering.

"I have been attending religiously to my professional duties; you know great men are always great slaves."

"Then how do you account for your lack of leisure?"

"I fear I must be discounting the future."

"Wouldn't it be charming if you could do all your hard work now, so that when you reach your best years, you could enjoy your enormous fortune!"

"I infer you do not think my present age the best; now I could extract from that remark either a compliment or the reverse: you mean one of two things—that I possess talents which will improve me, or that I am now so unsatisfactory that any change must be for the better."

"You are at liberty to put your own construction upon it. By the by, have you by any chance heard from your friend?"

Her tone was lightly careless, but I was not deceived.

"Yes, I have heard from him," I said slowly.

The color left her face. I waited for her, perhaps a little cruelly; finally, she said in a voice she could not make quite steady, "Did he say any thing in explanation?"

"No, he asked me to pity him and said he

could not bear to hear any tidings of you ; he is, he says, forlorn and despairing."

She looked utterly miserable, all the assumption of light-hearted gayety had died out of her manner in an instant ; she turned from me and stood with her hand upon the banister looking down the stairs so long that I at length determined to break the awkward silence, though I had nothing to say to her that was worth the trouble. "No one can feel deeper regret for what has happened than I, Miss Brainard, I had not thought him capable of acting toward you the part of—"

"Pardon me," she exclaimed, suddenly turning round ; I was startled at the change in her manner, her color had returned, her voice had a hard uncompromising ring, her eyes flashed, "I do not require any sympathy, the trifling flirtation is not worth an idle thought."

I was amazed ; I was prepared for any thing but this, from her ; she went on rapidly—and now she was smiling.

"Of course, as all girls will do occasionally, I was foolish enough to encourage him, and we both amused ourselves. I will go so far as to admit that I thought at one time he was quite the nicest man I had met. Wasn't it absurd?" and she burst into an unpleasant laugh.

"Do you mean to tell me you do not care for him now?"

"Of course not, I scarcely ever think of him."

"I don't believe you," said I deliberately. She drew herself up proudly. "I am not accustomed—but there, I forgive your rudeness, you are very greatly mistaken and—I will prove it to you."

"I know you love him ; you can not convince me to the contrary," I exclaimed with unreasonable choler.

"Do you know that you insult me by thinking I still care for a man who has forgotten me all—" she checked herself abruptly and walked rapidly away from me down the hall.

She did care for him probably more than ever—she was capable of any rash folly with such a temper roused. Pshaw ! it would all overflow and disappear in a flood of tears. I went down stairs, the German was resumed shortly, and I had forgotten the scene and was leaning against the wall, staring vacantly at a couple of family portraits opposite, and wondering why the old fellow with a red face hadn't died of apoplexy years before his picture was painted, when some one touched me on the shoulder ; it was Purvie, on his arm was Miss Brainard ; he looked me straight in the face and said, "Permit me to introduce my future wife."

I was looking at her intently. "Is this a jest?"

She was whiter than the lace about her throat. "No! Are you convinced now?"

I dared not trust myself to reply. I turned on my heel, went up for my hat and coat, and left the house.

My memory tells me it was a week after the night I left the Brainards in a rage, that Jack came to see me; he was scarcely in the room when he asked, "Well, have you heard the news?"

"I hope it is good news this time at any rate."

"Well, it isn't, by a long shot. Alice is going to marry that Purvie, and I shall have to acknowledge him as my cousin."

"Oh! yes, she told me of it a few moments after she had consented to make the sacrifice; she seemed quite proud of her conquest!"

"She may say what she likes, she isn't. I don't believe she cares for him at all; she won't see him unless aunt is in the room; that makes Purvie wild!"

Jack grew quite cheerful over the recollection.

"So the accepted suitor does not appreciate the chaperonage; does he raise objections?"

"No, but it seems to take all the talk out of him; his misery will soon be over though; but I guess you'd say it will soon commence, you're so down on marriage."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, didn't you know? They're going to be married in two weeks."

"The devil!"

"That's what I said. I was more surprised than you are too, because I've known her longer, and I didn't think she was such a fool."

I paced up and down my office, smoking and thinking.

"Jack, this must be stopped."

"That's why I came to see you, but how are you going to stop it?"

"I'll see your aunt and tell her what I know about the man."

"That's no good," he remarked, sententiously. "I gave her my opinion of him, and told her what other people said about his being a gambler and fast, and I asked her if she didn't *know* he was an idiot; but she said it was prejudice, and if there were no actual proofs of something wrong he had done, she wouldn't interfere with Alice's choice; the fact he was poor made no difference, he would not have the control of Alice's money. Alice is terribly down on you for something."

"How do you know that?"

"I think that 'cad' must have been telling her a lot of lies about you, because to-day at lunch when I said it was strange you hadn't been there lately, she said she hoped you would

never come again, and that from what she had heard the last two or three days, she was sorry she had taken that 'man and his friend' on trust, meaning you and Arthur, you know."

I was nonplussed.

"It seems to me we have wandered into a blind alley and reached the wall. Now, Jack, light that 'ambassador' and let's examine the situation carefully. In the first place, direct appeal to the mother is out of the question, for we have not the necessary proofs; in the second place, any thing I might say to your cousin would only exasperate her the more; now what is there left to do?"

Jack's face was a blank; I sat down, and leaning my head on my hands, puffed vigorously and called upon my unresponding brain for an inspiration. It was no use, I turned around and said, "I can't see daylight ahead, but I am determined to unearth some fact that will seem to your aunt weighty enough to justify her interference. In the meantime, suppose we go out for a bite."

I was putting on my coat when a thought flashed across my mind. "Has Purvie mentioned the existence of his sisters?"

"By George, that's funny, I don't believe Alice knows he has any."

"Will you make a point of asking her? and if she has never heard of them, will you ask

her, not bringing me in, mind, to inquire of Purvie where they are living?"

Jack readily agreed, but wanted to know my reasons. I would not tell him of the suspicion that was slowly taking form and developing into almost a moral certainty.

I made him repeat to me the story of his ride from Philadelphia, with his recollection of the appearance and conversation of the women with the French accent, and by good luck he had their address, which the younger girl had surreptitiously handed him. I took a memorandum of it; it was, "Number 2398 South Brier Street, Philadelphia."

Jack would report to me the next day. In the meantime, I gave myself up wholly to the logical solution of the puzzle, and sought to arrange the facts and suspicions in proper sequence, that I might arrive at some definite conviction.

I started with the fixed idea of rescuing the girl in whom I felt the tender interest a brother might have had, from a life of misery and regrets with a man who was neither mentally nor morally suited for the companionship of such a delicately attuned nature. To Arthur, she must have given the whole strength of her heart's inmost passion, and of the wreck he had created, there remained her pride, and in that was concentrated a strength which, now that

her love had gone, found terrible expression in this unreasoning welcome of the first refuge from the torturing memories of the recent past.

Now, what had I to build conclusions upon?

Purvie had not spoken of his sisters to Alice—that was singular, to say the least.

The woman in the car was French, so was the ballet-dancer Purvie had said might make trouble, if his friend married. This friend was ruined—so, according to common report, was Purvie. When he stated that case to me, had I been too lenient in my judgment? Was it his own case? At the time I had doubted it, but did not the better knowledge of his character I acquired that night at the club, justify me in thinking now that he would hesitate at nothing to recoup his losses? The positive assertion of De Grote, that he had no near relations, had almost convinced me the women were not his sisters; I had felt little interest in the matter at the time, but now there was scarcely room for doubt. Jack's report could not fail to throw some light upon the situation, and I must wait as patiently as I could for its arrival.

When I went into the dining room that evening, De Grote was just sitting down to dinner. I joined him and he opened the con-

versation by asking if I had heard the latest *on dit*.

“What do you refer to?”

“I just saw Albery, who says Purvie asked him to congratulate him; that he was shortly to be married to Miss Brainard. Pity she is going to throw herself away!”

“Yes, I knew of that and I agree with you; but I think, in regard to women, the French proverb, that the unexpected always happens, is applicable invariably.”

“Yes, and the best of them make the worst mistakes in choosing a husband; I didn’t think she was the sort to be taken in, though.”

“You told me some time ago that you were positive Purvie had no sisters; are you absolutely certain of that?”

“I am positive. Why do you ask; has he told you he had?”

“No. I heard indirectly that he had two, who live in Philadelphia.”

“Wouldn’t it be strange for him to live here and his sisters in another city?”

That was so, it was hardly supposable and the suggestion carried me a step further on the road to certainty.

“Has he been successful in any of his ventures lately?”

“I should imagine not, from the remarks of some men who are delighted at the idea of his

marriage, hoping the wife's money will liquidate their claims. I have a few of his I. O. U.'s. I'd sell at a horrible sacrifice."

I glanced up and saw Jack; he was looking for some one, evidently me, for he came over and sat down at our table; he refused my invitation to have some dinner, saying he had just dined at home. He did not talk much—apparently had something on his mind, probably he feared to speak before De Grote. I helped him out by asking if he had delivered my message.

"Yes, but the party won't see the other one to-night; he says he has an important engagement in Philadelphia; pity it isn't his own funeral!"

If my suspicions were well founded, no more despicable scoundrel lived than this man; how utterly devoid of all sense of decency or honor he must be, to keep an appointment with this woman on the eve of his marriage to Alice. It was scarcely probable he would do so.

I called for an evening paper, and glancing at the column of "Amusements," said I felt like going to see something that would drive away an incipient attack of the blues. "What do you suggest, De Grote?"

"I don't know, what do you find there?"

"Here's the 'Beggar Student,' that I've seen; 'Lucia' at the Metropolitan, 'Sonnam-

bula' at the Academy, neither of them especially cheering. Well, the only thing I see is Kiralfy's combination of Calcium and Costumes at the Star ; they're going to Philadelphia, and this is our last chance. What do you say to that ? ”

“ Those things are rather stupid, but we need not sit it out ; we can stand two acts of it, I suppose.”

“ That wretched play upon words ought to be followed by an antidote, and we'll go ; what do you say, Jack ? ”

We lighted cigarettes, and having crowded into one of the yellow and black cabs, vulgarly known as “ canaries,” jogged down the avenue. Pushing my way through the crowd in the outer lobby of the theater, I succeeded in approaching near enough to the box office window to perceive a square piece of paste-board, bearing the inscription beloved of managers, “ Standing room only.”

I retraced my steps and sought out one of those individuals who are so useful in such an extremity, the much anathematized “ speculator ; ” this one, through some unaccountable re-arrangement of his conscience, charged us only a modest fifty per cent. advance on the usual price, and we felt that life in the Metropolis was growing less gloomy. Our seats were three rows from the stage in the center of the

house, and if the blare of the trombones and the reverberating thud of the bass drum were distracting, the point of view was excellent.

As is usually the case in pieces of this character, the first scene was dull and served to develop the very slender plot. It was designedly tame, that the glories of the brighter parts might shine with added luster by contrast.

I glanced round to see what sort of a house it was, and if I could recognize any acquaintances, and my eyes rested upon Purvie seated a few rows back of us.

I leaned over in front of De Grote and whispered to Jack, "Purvie is here."

"What ! Where ? So he is, that's strange !"

What did it mean ? I had been of late so constantly engaged in trying to find motives for strange actions, that I was impatiently weary of the effort and turned to the stage for relief from my thoughts.

The curse had been pronounced and now the "ballet infernal" was about to begin ; there were the customary antics of the coryphées which were intended to represent dancing, and after they had subsided and had taken their positions on either side of the stage, leaving a broad lane down the middle, one of the "premières" made her appearance at the back just in front of the line of halberd-bearing, much be-tinned soldiers, and stood with outstretched arms and

poised toe waiting for the chord which would bring her pirouetting toward the footlights.

Though I was looking straight before me, I was conscious of a quick movement to my right and knew that Jack had suddenly straightened himself for a better view. She was a fair dancer, and making allowances for paint, was good looking, not to say pretty; after her came a woman who danced better, but was so ugly I was led to wonder why she did not wear a mask. We went out for a smoke after the first act. Jack was excited about something—he pushed ahead so fast we had difficulty in keeping him in sight; when we were outside he took me by the arm and leading me a little apart, said in a low tone, “Do you know who that is?”

He was so nervous he could not stand still.

“Which one do you mean?” said I, looking round.

“Not here, that woman on the stage!”

“That is very definite; now, at the least calculation, there must have been as many as—”

“I mean the first one that danced alone—that’s Purvie’s sister.”

I looked at him in blank amazement a second, and then it dawned upon me that all my surmises had been correct, and at last here was something tangible.

"Have you a programme? What is her name?"

She was billed as Mlle. Fleurette Troisfois, "The Celebrated Première Danseuse, who has been secured positively for two weeks only." It told me nothing. The ridiculous name was undoubtedly assumed. To set at rest all doubts, I determined to keep in sight of Purvie during the remainder of the evening, and if he joined her I would follow them. If I discovered where she lived, I would seek an interview the next morning. These indefinite plans shaped themselves quickly in my mind, and the probability that at length I would no longer be compelled to grope in the dark among unsatisfactory surmises and doubts buoyed me up to a sense of eagerness to begin the investigation.

Admonishing Jack not on any account to say a word to a living soul until I had all the proofs in my hand, I left them, making some plausible excuse to De Grote, and went back to the theater. I took up my position against the wall at the back, under the gallery, and a little to the left, where the light is usually so dim that for a person seated in the orchestra chairs it is difficult to distinguish the faces of the men who on crowded nights like this stand thickly behind the last row of seats.

Purvie was no longer there, and I fell to

torturing myself again, with the idea that he might not come back. I was upon the point of cursing my ill-luck, when just as the curtain went up he sauntered down the aisle. Of the remaining acts of the play I have not the faintest recollection; my eyes were riveted on one man, except during short intervals when the concentrated earnestness of my gaze produced giddiness, and I was forced to look away. He did not get up during the three other *entr'actes*, and for over two long hours I stood there on watch. If time were reckoned by nervous anxiety, my espionage had lasted weeks instead of hours. I hailed the final curtain with a sigh of relief, and prepared to dog his footsteps with redoubled vigilance. I kept in the shadow until he had passed out, and then followed him at as great a distance as I dared put between us. He walked slowly up to the corner of Fourteenth Street, stopped to light a cigarette, and turned down toward Fourth Avenue, stopping in front of a cab. He conversed with the driver a moment, and as the man was turning the vehicle round I heard him say "stage door." He went into the bar-room of a hotel, and I hastened after the cab, and posted myself on the side of Fourth Avenue, opposite the stage entrance of the theater. The people who had been fairies and princes were coming by twos and threes through the

swinging door, and as the bitter air of the street blew full upon them, they would convulsively give themselves a little shake, and drawing their old shawls or dilapidated coats more closely about them, would clutch the satchel or bundle with a firmer grasp and hurry off.

Pretty soon Purvie made his appearance from round the corner, and I pulled my hat further over my eyes, crowding closer under the doorway. He got into the cab, keeping the door open. At last a woman in a long fur dolman came out; he assisted her in, and the vehicle started toward Union Square. Then, for the first time, it occurred to me that it would be impossible to follow them on foot. I rushed wildly after them, but there was not a single conveyance of any description to be seen, except the one I was following, and that had already gained half a block. As I reached Broadway, still running, I saw a cab coming up; I hailed the driver, jumped in quickly, and telling him to keep in sight of the one I pointed out, sank back upon the cushions and breathed more freely. The pursuit took us down to Fifth Avenue, up to Twenty-eighth Street, and down that street nearly to Ninth Avenue. They stopped before a large house of respectable appearance; the driver received his fare and drove off, and Purvie and his companion went in. When the door had closed upon them, I

got out, made a memorandum of the number, and drove back to the club. What had I gained? Simply the moral certainty that the story Purvie had told me was an account of his own position. I could, no doubt, go to Mrs. Brainard, and, with the assistance of Jack's corroborative evidence, make out a strong enough case to justify her in interfering; but there was a chance that she would require absolute, irrefutable proof, and this I could not yet furnish. But I was on the right road, and if my interview of the next day were skillfully conducted, my case would be complete.

I was informed there was a gentleman waiting for me up stairs. I went up wondering who wanted to see me badly enough to select such an hour. It was Bullerton of the C. E. & X. Railroad, to which company I had the good fortune to be counsel. The details of the conversation are not relevant to the story, but the gist of the whole matter was that I must take the very first train in the morning for Baltimore, examine a lot of witnesses, and go over some appallingly voluminous accounts. This programme agreed but badly with my plans, but there was nothing for it but to pack up and start. The affair might occupy five days, or I might not get through in two weeks. Resolving, that however pressing my duties might be, I would steal time enough from them for an in-

terview with Mlle. Troisfois in Philadelphia, and then, if I could not come on, to write to Mrs. Brainard, I went to bed and made a more or less successful failure of trying to get a few hours sleep.

XI.

THE next afternoon as soon as I arrived at my hotel in Baltimore, I wrote to Jack, omitting all particulars, but cautioning him to let no word of what he knew escape him; to leave every thing in my hands. I assured him I was on the right track and would act in time to prevent the marriage.

The task I had undertaken widened and stretched out until it seemed as if the more I accomplished, the more remained to be done. The days slipped by rapidly, the unremitting work sending them back into the past, with a swiftness strangely at variance with the lagging hours when I have little to do save sit in my office waiting for possible clients. The twenty-seventh of January was here, the wedding was to be celebrated February first, and any steps I might take must be commenced at once; I had arrived now at the most important stage of my mission in the railroad case, and if I must go away at all, as I was determined to do at any cost, it could not be for more than one day. I took the train that evening for Philadelphia, arriving at midnight.

I matured my plan of action while in the cars.

Actresses are not early risers, and I would defer my visit until between eleven and twelve o'clock, when I would be most likely to find her at home; in the meantime I would send Jack a telegram asking him to take the next train and meet me at the Continental, for my intention was to send back by him all the facts in my possession in the form of a letter to his aunt, being unwilling to entrust the missive to the mails, and desiring too, to put Jack abreast of my knowledge to the smallest particular; his intercession might prove the additional weight which would turn the balance in favor of her interference in case my interview should be productive of no good results.

I had difficulty in restraining my impatience the next morning, and a little before the hour I had settled upon I took a carriage, and started upon the errand to which I looked forward with a little hope, and a great many misgivings: the telegram had been sent to Jack, I knew if he could he would come, and after my call, no matter what the result, I would at once write the letter and that night, or early next morning at the furthest, we could both leave, he for the North, and I for Baltimore.

I had thought of every thing except what I should say when face to face with this woman;

I did not know her name even; the chances were strongly against her "*Nom du Théâtre*" being her real one. I was puzzled how I should inquire for her. Just before we arrived at our destination I hit upon the expedient of employing a little treachery. I would say that I had a message from Mr. Purvie for the French lady; this was not brilliant, but perhaps it would do.

We had gone, I should imagine, about a mile, and were passing through a respectable looking street lined on both sides with the blank red brick and white marble houses whose glaring paleness gives the impression of a man with colorless eyes, and no hair, and whose monotonous uniformity makes that city the most uninteresting, perhaps, in the world, when we drew up before a house mid-way down the block. With a nervousness I could not entirely subdue I rang the bell, and in answer to the swollen-eyed, frowsy servant, who opened the door, said "I had a message from Mr. Purvie for the French lady who lived there;" she asked me if I would please to walk into the parlor and she would tell her. I went into a musty room where the odor of cooking was faintly perceptible, and sat down on an old scroll-back, hair-covered chair which creaked warningly, as if in protest against being expected to endure so much longer than the

many generations that had sat upon it, and gazed around in mild curiosity.

Every thing there had a faded, much worn air of genteel poverty, from the thread-bare carpet to the cracked veneering of the sofa, and the substitution of a covered brick for the normal caster; the walls were sparsely decorated with three or four old-fashioned portraits of stiff-necked people, in shining oval frames; over the mantle was a cheerful group of figures surrounding a grave shaded by the most doleful of weeping willows, the whole thing done in human hair and framed in somber black; in a vase were the remains of a bunch of wax flowers, and on the center table was the gilt-edged family Bible with a marker to indicate the location of the family record, and on the other end, carefully laid at right angles, was the "Young Ladies' Floral Companion," for the year 1856. In front of the closed doors at the lower end of the room was a square sort of ottoman with a padded top, evidently home-made, and probably a transformed soap box; a dim church-like semi-darkness charitably strove to hide the whole painfully rigid place. My nerves were strung to so tight a tension I believe I could have counted the threads where the nap was worn from the carpet. Presently the door opened. I started and turned round expecting to see Mlle. Troisfois. It was the

servant, who requested me to walk up stairs. I followed her up a long steep flight, across a landing, and then up three or four more steps and stopped at a door a few feet further on. In answer to her knock a musical voice said "Come." The door was opened, and the first glimpse I caught of the room and its occupant fairly took my breath away; I suppose a good part of my surprise was owing to the sudden transition from the gloom of that horrible barn-like "parlor" down stairs to the warmth and brightness of this luxurious boudoir; comfort and good taste were stamped upon every thing, the very air seemed to breathe an invitation to languorous contentment; near the blazing soft coal fire were two immense low chairs, so corpulent they looked unable to stand upright, and upon every available article of furniture and, almost entirely covering the carpet, were robes of fur; the walls were hung with artistic pictures tastefully framed, and in one corner was a piano, while books and bric-a-brac completely filled up the rest of the room; on a small table in the corner stood a big basket of flowers, probably a trophy from last night's performance.

Standing just at the back of one of the chairs in front of the fire was a woman whose age I mentally decided was about twenty-six in this light, and perhaps twenty behind the glare of

the foot lights. My first impression was that she was unequivocally handsome; she was dark, with an olive skin, and jet black eyes; her figure was graceful and well proportioned, and the only thing I could find fault with—and that I only discovered after we had entered into conversation—was the existence of an almost imperceptible fringe of fine black hair upon her upper lip. She was entirely self-possessed, and easily courteous in her manner as she slightly inclined her head, and inquired in a pleasantly modulated voice:

“To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?”

“I have to ask your pardon for having intruded upon you under false pretenses; you have it in your power to render me a great service. I do not bring a message from Mr. Purvie, but being aware you are acquainted with him, and not knowing your name, I took this unusual means of obtaining an interview with you.”

“You say I can render you a service; let us see if it excuses your action.”

She spoke with a slight accent which, however, did not soften the hard, business-like tone, and I realized she would stand no trifling.

“I should not care to have what I am about to say overheard by a third person; are we alone?”

She hesitated—"I do not see—"

"It concerns Mr. Purvie and yourself wholly."

"Julie," she called, and some one from the inner room replied; she asked her to close the door, then turning to me she gracefully waved me to a chair, and seated herself in the one opposite.

By way of opening the battle I handed her my card: "That is my name," I said, "I know Mr. Purvie quite well; we are members of the same club."

"I have heard him speak of you," she remarked, quietly.

I would throw out a little skirmish line:

"He has spoken to me of you, also."

That shot told; for a moment the enemy was demoralized, but she rallied quickly.

"What did he say of me?"

"He told me all the circumstances of your acquaintance, and of your present position."

She started forward and looked at me with contracted brow and searching gaze for an instant, "Excuse me, monsieur," she said, excitedly, "he could not be so *bête*: I can not believe you."

"He told me part, and the rest I have found out for myself."

She was calm again.

"Will you be so good to tell me why you come here; pardon, my time is much taken up."

"In the first place, I desire you to understand that I know every thing concerning your relations with Mr. Purvie; that will make what I must tell you easier for me to say and for you to hear."

"My relations with Mr. Purvie! *Ma foi!* They are the same exactly as my relations with others who are my good friends; they come sometimes to call on me; I receive them as I do you; *voilà tout.*"

"I am pained to be obliged to repeat what Mr. Purvie told me; he said he had first seen you at McVicker's in Chicago, had been infatuated with you, and had succeeded in making your acquaintance; that ever since that time he has provided for you."

She was perfectly cool, but a trifle paler, and there was a set ugly look about the mouth.

"Well, monsieur, what have you to do with all this?"

"I am coming to that, but I want to ask you first if you know he is utterly ruined."

"Perfectly."

I was making no headway at all; this woman appeared to be impenetrable; I must explode the bomb which would give her the *coup de grace*; I had reserved it for the last; it would be a cruel shock, but she seemed to be prepared for every thing else. I kept my eyes steadily upon her and said distinctly, "Did you know

that in two days he is to be married?" I confidently expected she would swoon, or go into hysterics, or at least rave at him, and swear to denounce him, but she sat as if listening to the most commonplace remark, and smiled—actually smiled.

"Is this what you came to tell me?"

"Do you mean to say you do not care to prevent this marriage of the man you love with another woman?"

"There—this interview had better end. I thank you for coming—you have amused me, but I have engagements, you know—"

Her sardonic coolness was driving out all my calculating self-possession.

In a voice I tried to make steady, I said: "Will you do nothing to prevent this pure, young girl from uniting herself to the abandoned profligate you know him to be?"

She smiled, and the evil look lent venom to the words.

"I would not lift my finger—so—to save her."

I had failed utterly, ignominiously; her devilish insensibility drove me mad. I went close to her, and said: "You shall prevent this crime, do you understand? you shall be forced to stop it. By Heaven! I will drag you into court, and compel you to claim him as your husband—an abandoned wretch like you shall

not ruin the life of that angel. Do you hear me?"

She sprang from her chair, and stood panting with her eyes dilated and rolling slowly around as if in search of something; if at that moment she could have found a weapon, I believe she would have killed me; she clutched the back of the chair, and lowering her head looked out from underneath her scowling brows like a tigress about to spring. Her breath came short and hard, and she hissed as if she wished each word might carry an actual sting.

"You have insulted me, you coward! If I were a man I would kill you. You are in love with that girl, you are impudent; you come to me and ask me to help you to get her back, I tell you now I hope he will drag her down to hell with him."

Again that horrible smile that made her face look like a grinning skull. I could bear no more, the fiendishness of this woman made my flesh creep; I was turning to go when she broke into a convulsive, demoniac laugh, shrill and high, and awful to hear; I stopped spell-bound; I could not have moved for the wealth of the universe. Her voice was now a suppressed shriek: "So monsieur does not like the truth *mais, attendez*, I am not through with you yet. You do not know who told him to marry this fool of a girl! why I did, yes *I, I!*

What would you have? He had lost all his money, we were poor; when I was sure she had a fortune I said to him, 'If I let you marry her will you promise to give me all the money I want and come to see me as often as I like to write for you?' and that is the understanding and I have it in writing—you can not prevent the marriage, and you shall not. I will take care of that, and I will get every sou of the money, and you, you—," again that weird laugh rang out. "You love this girl and you can not help yourself, you must live and see her suffer every day, every minute, and you know I have done it, *I*, whom you have insulted, you poltroon, *sapristi!* you low—" I had rushed from the room, and I could hear her imprecations until I had shut the front door behind me.

Did you ever, when a child, dream that you were being pursued by some terrible monster with blazing eyes and gnashing teeth, whose upraised arm held a gleaming knife ready to strike you dead, and you ran, oh! so hard, and were straining every muscle, but your feet were weighed down by some unaccountable force, and you could only shuffle slowly along. The door before you that would shut him out and save you was locked, and how real the agony of suspense as you fumbled with the key, knowing that the chances of escape were all

against you ! you shake the door with despairing energy, there is no help near, and in a moment more that cruel grasp will be upon you and the knife will do its sickening work. Oh, God ! must it all end here ? and you writhe and tug, and, as in your dreadful torture you feel the panting breath of your murderer upon your neck, you awake with a great thankfulness in your heart that it was only a dream after all ; but at first the horror of the thing is still upon you, and perhaps for many days a lingering sense of abject fright remains. Well, I am not ashamed to say that I experienced a degree of that sensation as I came down those stairs, and I was as grateful to find myself once more in the quiet street as if my interview had been with a veritable demon.

I had suffered a distinct defeat, had been completely routed, and driven from the field ; now there was nothing for it but to depend upon the presentation in the strongest light of the knowledge I had of Purvie's character and associations.

XII.

WHEN I returned to the hotel, I left word at the desk that if any one inquired for me he was to be shown up at once, and then went to my room, and laying out writing materials prepared to put what I had to say into as convincing a shape as I was capable of. Out of the meager material, I must construct an argument strong enough to keep apart two people who were determined within three days to become man and wife. The accusations would carry more weight if they could come from any one else, for it was but natural they should distrust my statements after my unfortunate espousal of Arthur's cause, in the face of the overwhelming proofs of his fickleness; I had made half a dozen beginnings and had impatiently torn them all up, when Jack opened the door:

"Well, I didn't waste much time, did I? Have you seen her?"

"I just came from her house."

"How'd you come out?"

"I ran out," said I, smiling grimly.

Jack chuckled gleefully. "Did she set her dog on you? Which way did you come—window or door?"

"It wasn't funny by any means: the upshot of the whole move is—failure."

His face fell; "Do you mean we will have to let her marry that—" he was casting about for some epithet strong enough to fittingly express his loathing—

"No," I interrupted, "I think if I send back by you the right sort of letter we may gain our point."

He mused a moment and then broke out with, "Say, I ain't afraid of that fellow, and I was thinking yesterday if I got into a fight with him—I might get whipped—but perhaps I could give him a black eye, and a man can't get married with a green shade over his eye, can he?"

As perplexed and worried as I felt, I could not resist the inclination to laugh at the air of perfect seriousness with which he made the ridiculous proposal, the mental picture of the rakish figure the elegant Purvie would cut standing at the altar with a shade over one eye, was exquisitely absurd.

"No, Jack, I don't think I would try that; extreme measures would only thwart our plans. Now let us put our heads together and compose the letter,"

We set to work and our collaboration had produced a rough draft of what we intended saying, and I proceeded to write out an elaborated copy; Jack had gone over to a seat by the window and was smoking a cigarette; a knock came at the door, "Come," I said; a boy came in.

"A letter for you, sir."

"All right," I muttered, without looking up, "just put it down;" he laid it on the other side of the table and went out slamming the door after him, in revenge for not getting the expected tip; I went on writing and had nearly finished; Jack asked if I was through; "Almost," I said; he got up, threw his cigarette away, stamped once or twice to restore the set of his trowsers and lounged over toward the table:

"Hello! Why here's a letter from Arthur."

"What!" I exclaimed, jumping from my chair; I was thunderstruck. While I was hastily tearing it open, it occurred to me he would not have written if he had not some good news to tell me. This is what he had to say:

"HEIDELBERG, JANUARY 12, 1883.

"MY DEAR VAN:—Your unkind letter reached me yesterday; if you deliberately set about hurting me it will afford you satisfaction to know you have succeeded. I looked upon

you as the dearest friend I had on earth, yet no implacable enemy could have wounded me more cruelly. In heaven's name why did you not long ago question Alice Brainard and learn the truth? It seems to me unaccountable that you should not have found it out; but if you really thought me mad enough to leave that girl, by my own inclination and without sufficient reason, why, during all these weeks, have you not taken the simple step of asking what drove me away? Was it, do you think, the part of a friend, to write that bitter note, knowing, as you did, that I was heartsick and wretched? You knew I must have had some strong reason for the step I took, and I do not see, in any case, why you should have felt obliged to assume so high-handed a style; and there are passages I have puzzled over, but can not comprehend! You say, if I come back you hope I will come alone; in the name of all that is sensible how should I come? Did you suspect me of an intention of introducing oriental customs, and landing in New York with a turbaned retinue? Should I ever come back, I may bring over a dog or two, but my own personality, in the present state of my mind, is care enough for me.

“I don't want to lecture you, nor am I disposed to pay you in kind, but I call the letter you sent me unnecessarily priggish, and devilish

unkind. There is some big mistake somewhere, for it isn't like you to give me such an unconscionable laying out ; you have got things twisted somewhere, and I'll try to put you right, although it forces me, reluctantly, to call up recollections I had hoped to have forgotten, to feel regrets which are as sharp as stabs. There is not much to tell. Here is the whole miserable story : It is useless to tell you I loved her ; you knew the beginning, you saw the growth of the feeling which made of me her slave, her worshiper ; she was to me more than human and higher than any being of the world I knew, or of the kingdoms of space ; no earthly or heavenly interest occupied ungrudged one instant of my thoughts, the hours not passed with her were counted lost ; in a word, *she* was *all* to me—the rest was nothing. All this you must have seen. When you looked at her you saw a beautiful face—when I looked into her eyes I saw a whole eternity of happiness. It was as if, to every one but me, there was a veil, and I fancied that the depths of her soul could be fathomed only by my gaze. I thought, in my conceit, I was not indifferent to her, that she felt for me, if a little less than love, a little more than friendship, and I hoped that in the course of time she might consent to become my wife. Oh, God ! If that happiness had

been given me, how tenderly I would have loved and cared for her !

“Well, you remember that night at the club when I told you I had determined to ask her. You recollect, as I was about to go out Mr. Purvie joined us, and spoke of a patent he had brought to my attention, and took out of his pocket a letter, and tearing off what he supposed was the blank sheet, wrote upon it an address and handed it to me ; then you asked me the man’s name, and I read it to you ; the light shone through the paper, and, seeing there was writing on the back, I turned it over and, noticing the signature, read what was written there ; you saw how disturbed I was, and when you have read this fragment of a letter which I inclose, you will know the cause and will understand why I have put the ocean between her and myself.”

Pasted in this place on the sheet was the scrap of paper which I insert here, as it forms part of his letter ; it was apparently the continuation over-page of a note, and was written on heavy linen paper in a woman’s hand :—“on Tuesday, but I am expecting that tiresome Mr. Wardwell, who is so obtuse he seems incapable of understanding that we are engaged, and I am really afraid I shall have to come out with it point blank, and then perhaps you and I, *darling*, can have one evening to ourselves.

Dear Philo., I am so glad you are not a great big stupid like him. What do you think! I told mamma of our engagement to-day, and when she heard there had been an understanding between us for so long she cried a little and said she thought she deserved to be treated with more confidence, but it's all right, and the dear good old soul approves of my choice, as if any one could find fault with *my Philo*.

"Now please come early to-night, *dear*, so that when that hateful Mr. W. calls I can say I am out.

"Your own loving

"ALICE."

Arthur resumes his letter at this point :

"I shall never be more sorely tempted to take my own life, than I was in the first strong wrench of the exquisite agony that tore my soul. When the awful sickness of despair blotted out every hope, every longing, and I knew there was for me no present, no future, no past, a blind beast-like fury took possession of me. I was mad and something seemed to be saying to me—'Kill that man and then commit self murder—there is no other way.'

"After a little, I grew calmer, or perhaps it was the beginning of the dull, numb suffering I have felt ever since, and then my only thought was to get away at once, any where, so it

should be far from the woman whose memory was a torture unspeakable.

"You know how I went early the next morning to the steamer and came over here.

"I have sought forgetfulness in many ways, have tested the virtue of serious occupation, have traveled rapidly from place to place, but wherever I go, whatever scene claims my attention, her face is always there; like a disembodied soul I wander, conscious of little that goes on around me, my existence but a memory. I tell myself I ought not to permit my thoughts to linger upon the affianced wife of another man, but, God help me! how weak I am!

"And I have brought it all upon myself; if I had not been insane enough to cherish the flattering belief that she could find something to care for in me, I might have fought against the passion. Now you know the whole story.

"The only hope left to me is that you, my dear old friend, will not add to the bitterness of my life by withdrawing your confidence.

"I go from here back to Paris—in the big city the chances for sinking memory are better.

"Don't write to me about her."

"ARTHUR.

"P. S. In reading your letter again, I notice you refer to a report that I had engaged

myself to some woman over here. Of course you did not seriously credit so stupidly foolish a rumor; I ascribe your reference to it to the sweet temper you must have been in when you wrote to me.

“A. D. W.”

There was a gulping fullness in my throat, and a great sense of thankfulness at my heart. I was wildly excited with the sudden relief, the surprise, the joy at so unexpectedly getting dear old Arthur back again completely cleared of every suspicion, and coming back to me, as it were, from the grave, nobler in my eyes than ever.

“Jack! Jack!” I cried, “this is the greatest day since the world began; to think that I was ass enough to doubt him; I wish I was in a ten acre lot, I’d give one yell that would raise your hair—here—stop—we’ll celebrate.” I rang for a hall boy, and ordered a bottle of Pommery, “Shake hands, old man, every thing’s all right now, and that woman may go to the devil!”

Jack was standing with his hands in his pockets, regarding me curiously; he had a vague idea that Arthur had sent some very good news.

“Say, stop jumping around like a hen with her head off, can’t you, and let me into the secret.”

"Read that, read that, if you want to be surprised ; read it, and tell me what you think now of Mr. Purvie. What luck to have that letter come to-day !" I lighted a cigar and paced up and down the room while Jack read the letter. His frequent nervous starts and sharp ejaculations of "By George !" or "Thunder !" showed the effect it produced upon him. When he had finished he looked at me with wide open eyes, and said in a wondering tone :

"Well, of all the scoundrels—why Alice never wrote that note, that isn't any thing like her hand writing."

"He played a deep game, Jack, didn't he ? Who would have thought he had the brains."

"Now," said I, when the wine had been brought, "here's luck and happiness to the best fellow that ever lived, and to Mrs. Wardwell that is to be, and confusion to that sneak and his accomplice."

"By gracious !" said Jack, "I can hardly believe it yet, it's all so different from the way we supposed things stood, and that engagement wasn't true, either."

"No, it was only one more lie gotten up to order ; the scheme was an artful one, but they didn't count on us, Jack ;" and we shook hands again and laughed delightedly to think how utterly routed they would be. In my mind's eye, I saw with intense relish, the exquisite

picture of Purvie being shown the door, and Alice scornfully telling him she knows all his villainy. When the first ecstasy of glad relief had, in a measure, subsided, I sat down and wrote out an account of the arrival of the letter and called Mrs. Brainard's attention to the fact that the portion of a note, which had driven Arthur away, had been forged, and that, in my mind, there was no doubt that it had been done by the French woman; that the published notice of the engagement must have emanated from the same vile source; and that now that we had Arthur's denial of its truth, the situation was the same precisely as before he went away, and the end must be the happy re-uniting of two hearts we knew loved so tenderly; and I could not forbear crowing a little over the fact that I had always stoutly maintained that, in spite of appearances, my friend's conduct would finally be vindicated. I had not believed it completely myself, but it is human to say, "I told you so."

I put Arthur's letter, with its inclosure, into an envelope, together with the account I had written, addressed it and handed it to Jack—he put it in the inside pocket of his coat and to make sure he should not lose it, I pinned it securely to the lining. Then we shook hands once more and had another glass of wine, and I remarked it was the happiest day of my

life, and Jack said "Me, too," and, if we had been women, we would have cried over the situation.

"Now then, when do you go back?" I asked.

"Oh, I think I'll stay here to-night, take in the theater, and leave after breakfast in the morning."

"Why not go to-night? The sooner your aunt gets that the better."

"There's no such terrible hurry, any time to-morrow will be soon enough, and I'd rather stay here. Come on, let's play some billiards, and after supper we'll go somewhere, that was the original programme."

I made no further objections, and we spent the evening in the billiard room, more for the sake of having something to do, than for any attention we were able to give to the game. Again and again we talked over the fortunate solution of the complication, and chuckled at the thought of the conspirators' discomfiture.

The next morning at half past nine, we shook hands and parted: Jack took the ten o'clock train for New York, and I was to go on the limited express back to Baltimore; I took with me a lighter heart than I had known for many a long day, for I was sure now that the marriage would not take place, and my dear old friend had come back to me.

It was understood that Jack was to write me a faithful account of how his aunt set about telling Alice, and what the effect on her was. I could imagine pretty nearly how it would all come to pass, how Alice's love for Arthur would burst through the fetters of wounded pride, and share in her heart the feeling of intense loathing for the wretch who had sought to part them ; how she would feel that until he should come back she could not live, but, with suspended faculties, bridge over the interval until his return. How glad she would be ; and her mother too, would she not be delighted at the thought that, after all, the cloud had been lifted from her darling's life, and the peril of that other monstrous alliance been averted ? How happy we would all be when Arthur should be with us once more. As soon as I should learn the particulars from Jack I would write to him, telling him every thing, begging to be forgiven for my lack of faith and urging him to lose no time in getting back.

I remained for two days in this contented, tranquil frame of mind, then Jack's letter came.

"DEAR VAN:—I've got a lot to tell you, but I'm in an awful hurry, so I can't be particular about the style or the grammar.

"The day I left you in Philadelphia, I got home all right and found aunt in the sitting-room—she was wild with me for staying out all

night, said she had been worried to death; where had I been? I told her you had telegraphed for me and I had gone to Philadelphia; she gave me the 'old boy,' because I didn't let her know where I had gone; I told her I had a letter for her which would explain every thing. I was dying to see that letter knock her all of a heap. I handed it to her, and said, 'I guess when you read that, you'll think you oughtn't to scold me any more,' and then I stood off and watched her; she sat down and read it all through and then she got awful white and just lay back, and I thought she was dead; so I began to yell for Alice, and she came running down stairs; she screeched a little and went and took her mother's hand and commenced slapping it and told me to get some water quick; when I came back she asked me how it had happened. I said I had just given her a letter from you with one Arthur Wardwell had written to you; she turned round on me awful mad, and said, 'Don't you ever speak that man's name again.' I wouldn't stand that, so I said, 'That's the thanks I get for helping to clear up this mystery; that man is coming back, and I wouldn't be in that brute of a Purvie's shoes for a good deal, I tell you.' She thought there was something in it then, and she squinted her eyes and looked sort of queer, and said, 'What do you mean?'

“ ‘I mean that it’s all a mistake, just as I said it was at first, and Van and I have found that scoundrel out; why don’t you read the letter and then you’ll know all about it?’ She got as white as aunt, and I thought she was going to faint too, but she didn’t; she kept looking at me while she slowly stooped over and picked up the letter; then she read it carefully all through, and when she had almost finished aunt came to, and looked around and screamed, and said, ‘Alice, give me that letter, do you hear, give it to me,’ but Alice paid no attention at all—she didn’t seem to hear her, but just kept right on, and then aunt put her hands up to her face and began moaning, ‘Oh! My poor darling, my poor little girl!’

“I was beginning to get scared and I felt mighty uncomfortable, I can tell you.

“Alice got through at last, and she crumpled the letter up in her hand and stood still, looking at the other end of the room. If she had been told she couldn’t live another minute, she wouldn’t have looked any worse; I couldn’t get it through my head at all—they ought to be so glad they could jump over the house, but you’d have thought they were practicing for a choice funeral. Alice said, just as if some one had struck her, and it hurt—‘Too late, my God, too late.’ That frightened me, ‘What’s the matter, you look like a ghost?’ She was

just as still as if she had been made out of stone ; she slowly turned her eyes round to me, and said in a sort of hoarse voice, ‘ I am that wretch’s wife.’ I was so astonished I nearly fell down. ‘ *What !* ’ I yelled, ‘ you have married that low-lived blackguard ? ’ She didn’t answer—but I saw she meant yes. ‘ Why, it wasn’t to have been until to-morrow—are you sure ? ’ That was an idiotic question to ask her, but I couldn’t believe it yet. She held out her hand, and there was the wedding-ring ; she took it off and coolly tossed it into the fire.

“ ‘ What possessed you to marry him to-day ? ’

“ ‘ He said he had important business and must go away to-night for a long while ; ’ she spoke as if she wasn’t talking to any body.

“ I think it was about then that I commenced to understand what had happened, and I got madder than I ever was in my life ; I was trembling all over. ‘ Where is he ? ’

“ ‘ Down stairs.’

“ I started for the door, and I think if I had gone down those stairs, I would have killed him sure, I could have strangled forty fellows like him. Alice said, ‘ Stop, Jack.’ I turned round and looked at her. ‘ You must not touch him ; we want no scandal.’ I knew she was right, but it was ‘ hard lines ’ to let him go scot free ; she went over to her mother, who was

still crying, and laid her hand on her shoulder: 'Mamma,' she said, 'it is hard, hard, but I deserve it all for doubting *him*;' she walked slowly out and went down to the drawing room. I ran down the back stairs and stood in the hall near the door, so I could be near her, if she wanted me. When she went in, that cur said, 'Dear Alice—why, what's the matter, love, are you ill?'

"Do not come near me, I know you now, and I hope these will be the last words I shall ever say to you. I am your wife in name, God help me! But I shall never again speak to you or recognize you. Go!'

"Why, what—what do you mean? You can't be in earnest?'

"I know how vile you are, and once more I tell you to go!'

"Alice, my darling! For heaven's sake have pity on me, remember how I loved you—'

"I shall listen to you no longer; if you do not go at once, I shall leave the room and you can take your departure at your leisure.'

"Purvie's voice changed, it got harsh and ugly:

"Do you think I have worked and schemed all this time to be thwarted now that you are my wife—do you think I have no rights? You have found me out, have you? Well, what good will that do you? You will find that the

law will give me all my rights as your husband, and if you choose to be obstinate, I'll show you that I can be a hard master. Your elegant airs won't have the same effect on me now that they did when you made me keep my distance. You must obey me, do you understand?'

"I thought it was about time to interfere, so I walked in and went up close to him, and said :

"' You can either go out quietly, damn you, or I'll throw you down the stoop!'

"He looked at me a second, and then he edged off and I guess he thought I meant business, because he turned round and went out of the door. I was itching to hit him, but I knew Alice wouldn't like it, so I let him go.

"I must hurry up and get through with this letter, for we start for the steamer in half an hour; we are going to Europe on the German line to be gone an indefinite time, so Alice says—she has arranged it all, and I have been flying around so, buying things and attending to some business matters for aunt, that this is the first chance I've had to drop you a line. I suppose all this will surprise you—you thought every thing was all right, same as I did; aunt says there is no way out of the scrape without suing for a divorce—she has had her lawyer here—

and of course they wouldn't do that, so we are going as far away from him as we can get—there are no plans, you know, we are just going to loaf around on the Continent, and I would think it a jolly old spree, if the crowd was a little more cheerful. Alice don't cry any; aunt is the only one who does that, and she is pretty moderate about it, but they don't indulge much in smiling. It's awful hard to think nothing can be done—if that Purvie would only have the decency to go and die, every thing would be all right again; Alice would be a widow—she isn't going to change her name though, she is still Miss Brainard.

“I haven't any address to give you, but when we get on the other side I'll send you one.

“Yours,

“JOHN ELMER.”

I think by this time my sensibilities were dulled: I was shocked; I felt intense regret, but the rapid succession of strong emotions I had been experiencing had worn out my capability to appreciate the sharpness of disappointment, which would have overwhelmed me a few weeks earlier. Here, I might be certain, was the end, unless a miracle should be performed. When the situation had been at its worst, Arthur's letter had come and apparently every thing would be ordered according to our dearest wishes; it seemed as if beyond a per-

adventure, the happy end had come to our all but certain doubts and despair, and, with the future secured, Jack arrives one little hour too late, and the contract which a whole lifetime of weeping can not blot out, has been signed, and these two, as far apart as the devil and the angels, are bound together by a tie which would cut deep into her soul, and its tightening strain at last would break the bonds which bound her to the rack of torturing regrets, and her heart would go to wait for his, where love is justice and the right is law. That would be the only solution—she would die at last. Her life would be a sweetly bitter dream of what it might have been; Arthur would still have all the tenderness she would strive to drive out of her rebellious thoughts; but she would faithfully keep to the lonely path, unlighted, save by the uncertain glare at the further end, faintly shining from beyond the grave.

My thoughts were somber, and, for a day or more I had an attack of the blues. I recollected I owed Arthur a letter; dear old chap, how terribly hard he would take it, when he heard happiness had been snatched from him when it was so nearly within his grasp! Then it occurred to me that as soon as I had finished this railroad business, I would have little or nothing to do, and why not run over and see him? I might as well, and to tell the truth I had a half acknowledged

fear that the latest and worst misfortune might drive him to something desperate, and there was no one who could persuade him out of a rash resolve but myself, so I made up my mind to go.

XIII.

THE bright morning sun threw lace-work patterns of the leafless twigs upon the asphalt; the hard metallic sound of the omnibus wheels, and the absence of tables in front of the Café Americaine told that it was winter, but the air had the softness of spring with the tonic flavor of October. On the boulevard the crowd on this side, the crowd made up of so many elements, and yet seeming essentially typical, was moving steadily past for the most part toward the Madeleine; on the other side, gazing in the window of the toy store were some poorly clad children; further to the right two young men were emerging from the tobacco shop; there were a half dozen women of various ages, and various degrees of genteel black shabbiness; there were people enough and vehicles enough, but the scene, in spite of the brilliant sun-light, was depressing. I think Paris always is at nine o'clock in the morning. If you wish to see her in a smiling mood, you must never make the mistake of rising before ten.

When one can not sleep, however, even the

contemplation of the half awake loitering crowd, and that deep sense of loneliness which is only felt where humanity swarms thickest, are preferable to the stuffy closeness of a hotel room. This was my second day in Paris.

About ten days after receiving Jack's letter, I finished my work in Baltimore, went back to New York, straightened out my own affairs, and a week thereafter took passage for Liverpool. The trip over was the usual thing; a little seasickness, a very trifling amount of what I called good weather, a great deal of what the officers said was "fine weather," and two days of what they acknowledged was "a little rough;" the growing impression that we were there to stay; and the feeling at last that it was strange we had actually sighted land, and would once more walk on something firmer than a tilting plank.

I had gone up to London without wasting a moment, caught the tidal train for Folkestone, and here I was, glad I had come on Arthur's account, but sorry on my own. I had told him every thing yesterday. What a day that was! I shall never believe that all through the afternoon, he was not mad: if the doctor had not given him opiates, I am confident he would have destroyed himself as he said so calmly he would do, and in spite of me too—I would have been a child in his grasp. What a wonderful

thing this love of his was—I thought so then, I think so now.

When he awoke he was quiet and rational, but how pitifully sad was the look in his eyes as he gazed far back into his dreary thoughts.

As I regarded him critically, the task I had set myself appalled me. To attempt to cheer him up would make the extraction of wit from a funeral sermon a mere bagatelle by comparison. What an awful undertaking it had been to break it to him gently! How fiercely, delightedly happy that amazed “What!” had been, when I told him the piece of a letter was a forgery and she never had cared for any one but him; how his face had brightened, and his eyes grown soft, and then, observing my grave appearance, the glad look had died out, and the trouble had crept into his face and had gradually deepened until rapidly I had told him all, and he was for the time mad.

No question elicited any reply, he only kept mumbling unintelligible words to himself; and then I had sent for a physician, and he had said his state was precarious and the attack might result in brain fever; he was suffering from some immense strain on the nerves, the head was the weak spot, and he must be kept quiet; if he awoke the next morning in his usual health all would be well, and then he must be amused, diverted from the thoughts that had

caused the trouble; he gave him some morphine, and fortunately Arthur awoke this morning without a trace of fever.

I walked back into the court and met him as he came down the steps: He was pale and there were dark rings under his eyes! "Now old man!" said I, briskly, "let's go for a little walk as an appetizer, and then we'll have breakfast."

He assented and we turned down, and walked as far as the Champs Elysées, and continued on up that avenue, talking about the political situation at home, the opera, the men at the club, my railroad case, and every thing I could think of that had no bearing on his trouble. He could not exhibit much cheerfulness, but I could count on his manfully hiding his grief—his was not a nature to weakly give way, no matter how severe the blow. There were very few people in this part of Paris at that hour: there was a sprinkling of *bonnes* with their charges, an occasional horseman, and here and there a pedestrian like ourselves; there was nothing in our surroundings to inspire me, and soon we grew silent. We slowly walked on and after a long pause, he said:

"What do you think that scoundrel will do?"

"I don't know."

He stopped and faced me.

"Yes, you do. You think as I do. All he wants is money, and he would stoop to any thing to obtain it. She will not see him, but do you imagine that for one moment he will cease persecuting her? I believe she will never know a peaceful hour while he lives."

It was true. I knew he was right. The same thought had occurred to me.

"What can you do? If you were to interfere, idle tongues would attack her reputation. You have no rights that conventional propriety would recognize: he is her husband in name—"

"Yes," he broke out bitterly, "the miserable farce is stronger than the truth, and she is so good, she will render him the faithfulness that will always keep us apart. Is it right that a life like hers should be sacrificed to him?"

"Right or not, the fact is the same and there is no help for it. Look it squarely in the face, Arthur. It is not easy, but try to give her up and turn your attention to other things—this brooding is dangerous. Why not go back home? You would feel more reconciled at the thought that thousands of miles separate you."

"No, I shall stay here, I may be of use. Oh, my God!" he exclaimed passionately, "if I could do any thing, any thing to help her!"

"She does not require help from any one. You know her nature well enough to be sure she will have nothing to do with him, and my

opinion is he is afraid of her and will not adopt any extreme measures."

Arthur smiled grimly. "He had better not."

I think it was then the thought first occurred to me that I must prevent a meeting between the two men.

He put his hand on my shoulder and said slowly :

"Van, will you show me that there is something left worth living for? She is gone and I see nothing ahead. What can I do?"

I took his hand: "There is your profession, old man, you can easily reach the top there."

He shook his head and looked vacantly past me toward the *Bois*. "No, that isn't exciting enough; I want something that will absorb every thought—hard, constant work of some kind, and something that will not leave me too much alone."

"Don't you think travel is the best thing?"

"Perhaps so," he said wearily, "let us try it."

From that moment I never heard him utter one word of complaint; his old cheerfulness was not there, but he had bravely accepted the inevitable.

We went to the Café Riche that morning for breakfast. The outer tables were taken, so we sat near one of the mirrors. I was just giving the order, when without a word of warning some one struck me a blow on the back which almost

took my breath away, and a hearty voice that lingered with a relish on the letter "r" exclaimed:

"Well, I never expected to see you here. Where'd you come from? Hello, there's Wardwell, too; how are you?"

It was Halleck, an old school friend who had gone into the dry-goods business in Chicago—one of those enterprising New Englanders whose society is more or less agreeable according to the surroundings, and the topic under discussion; fortunately we escaped this time with only a passing allusion to the state of trade, and the price of calico. A good hearted fellow, but one who had always been a little raw.

"Sit down and have some breakfast."

"Breakfast! You can't get any over here," he said, with a look of supreme disgust. "For the last ten weeks I have been trying to get a square meal and haven't succeeded yet. Why, I came into this very place yesterday morning and called for five different dishes—ordered 'em all at once, you understand, to save time—knew I'd have to send back most of 'em. Well, sir! I went out hungry, and the experiment cost me thirty francs. I'd give fifty dollars for a good solid American breakfast. They don't know how to live over here; look at their dinners—nothing but a lot of scraps with highfalutin

names. It'll be a blessed day when I get back to New York and can have some sweet potatoes and corn and pie."

"You seem to be having a hard time," I remarked laughing.

"I should say so. They don't even serve coffee like Christians; instead of giving you a regular cup with your meal, you have to drink a lot of sour wine, 'cause the water ain't fit even to wash in, and after you're all through they bring on a thimble-full of black stuff that could give quinine points for bitterness. I tell you, I'm about tired of this sort of thing. And I can't stand a nation of beggars either. They always have their hands out. They're a very open-handed set," he concluded with a grin.

"If you don't like it, why do you stay here?" Arthur inquired.

"Well, I'll tell you; I sent a chap over last spring to buy some silks, down in Lyons, you know, and he made a fearful mess of it; bought the wrong goods and got swindled almost out of his eyes; talk about Yankee shrewdness! We ain't a patch on these fellows. We dropped a lot of money, but we gained the experience, and this time I calculated if any body got stuck it'd better be the head of the house, so I came. I didn't go right back, because I'd never been in Europe before, and I wanted to see it all, so I've been taking in the principal points; been

down the Rhine, through Switzerland, Lake Como, Rome, the regular thing, you know ; all Americans do it, only I ain't like most of 'em, they worry through the trip and swear they had a grand time—I acknowledge I was a first-class fool to come ; I tell you there's no place like Chicago."

"How about New York?" I ventured timidly.

"Oh ! New York's well enough, but it's a little too slow for me ; too much stagnation in trade."

I noticed that in spite of his abhorrence of French cooking, he was making a very satisfactory meal.

"Did you meet any Americans?" Arthur asked, and I thought I knew what was in his mind.

"Yes, a good many ; let's see"—he paused to think with his fork pointing upward, his eyes on the ceiling, and his jaws working ; "Let's see ; oh ! yes, in Nice I saw a fellow perhaps you know—man by the name of Purvie ; I used to know him in Chicago two or three years ago ; been in New York some time ; he's a light weight !"

"Yes, we know him. You say he is in Nice ; when were you there?" Arthur had stopped eating, and was looking intently at Halleck.

"Just came from there three days ago ; he's

going it strong. If he owes you any money this is a good time to strike him for it, he's winning it by the cords; the day I got there, I went over to Monte Carlo to throw away a few dollars, and who should I see but this Purvie as large as life, and looking as if he was cutting a pretty wide swath. I thought I'd just watch him, and while I stood there, he raked in twenty-five hundred francs. The next night he did the same thing only he won more. He's liable to go broke at one sitting, but he's flush now."

"Was he intending to remain there long?"

"I don't know, I don't speak to him; he tried it, but I cut him dead. We were at the same hotel."

"You are not on friendly terms with him, then? Perhaps you are one of his unfortunate creditors?" Arthur hinted.

"No, that ain't it. You see he was a member of my club, the Junior Occidental, and one evening the boys got up a game of 'draw;' this Purvie was in it, and they caught him cheating. Tom Fennell grabbed a chair and started for him and Purvie left his chips on the table and made a break for the door." Hal-leck stopped to laugh. "Well, sir, you could have played checkers on his coat tails as he went down stairs. Of course we bounced him, and none of the boys would recognize him after that."

With a lingering chuckle he returned to his breakfast.

"When do you leave Paris?" I inquired.

"I don't know; when do you go?"

Arthur said quickly, "We take the train to-night for Nice."

I looked up amazed; this was a project I had not heard of.

Halleck said with a knowing leer, "So you're going to try Purvie's system, are you? I hope you'll break the bank, but if you have my luck you'll only break your own bank account."

He bade us good-by after breakfast, saying with a sigh, "I may see you before you leave, but I can't tell: I've laid out to do the Louvre to-day."

When he was gone, I turned to Arthur, who was dipping a cigarette in his Chartreuse—

"Were you in earnest about that trip to Nice?"

"Yes."

"You go because he is there. What good will it do you? Can you gain any thing?"

"I don't know."

"I do. You will have a confoundedly disagreeable journey for nothing."

"Still, I am going," he said, quickly, looking at me through the smoke.

"See here, Arthur, don't be obstinate; it

won't make you feel any better to have a look at that fellow."

He puffed at his cigarette and said nothing.

"Have you fully made up your mind to go?"

"Yes."

"Then do me the favor to wait until we get a letter from Jack ; it won't be more than a few days now. I left instructions at home to have every thing forwarded to me here, and a letter is due."

The suggestion seemed to strike him favorably.

"That's a good idea, Van. We'll wait."

We remained in Paris three days, and I conscientiously strove to fill every hour with some undertaking or amusement. Arthur thwarted me in nothing ; he agreed to every proposition, entered willingly into all my plans. He was pleasant, but not gay ; he sat through the opera, but did not enjoy it ; he passively yielded himself to my guidance, but if he found no fault, on the other hand he offered no suggestions. He would take up a book or a paper and sit for hours with it on his lap, lighting cigarette after cigarette and thinking ; no murmur, no exclamation would escape him ; he calmly yielded himself to the fiend that was torturing him, and gave no sign that memory was trying his soul almost beyond human endurance. He was a grim figure at that time ; his

hurt must be borne and nursed alone ; my sympathy could not reach as deep as the blow had struck.

On the third day I received a packet from New York. Among the rest was a letter post-marked at Stuttgart ; it was from Jack, I opened it and read :

“MY DEAR VAN:—Europe is not what I thought it was. I could have more fun in New York in a day than I could here in a century. It’s *beastly slow*. Instead of going to some lively place they’ve buried themselves in this crazy old town. There’s the awfulest old duffer here for a king you ever saw, looks like one of our aldermen—I always thought kings looked grand and wore crowns. There is nothing to do and nowhere to go, and all we amuse ourselves with is eating and sleeping, and reading Tauchnitz novels. I’ve read more books since I’ve been here than all the rest of my life put together—two a day is my regular diet. I wish to heaven you would come over here and induce them to go somewhere else—aunt says she intends staying all winter, and may be until next summer ; says she is tired of traveling—now, isn’t that rough on me ? I’m not tired of it—I never had a chance to be. I asked Alice the other day how she liked it, and she said she didn’t care, one place was the same as another to her, as long as she could

be quiet. Between you and me, I think it's bad for her; she isn't like herself; she is pale and doesn't seem to take any interest in any thing. She tries to be cheerful, but she isn't, and often I have to speak to her two or three times before she hears me.

"We had been here less than a week, and one day when I was in the sitting room alone, a letter came up; I looked at the envelope, and saw it was mailed from Nice; it was directed to Alice in a man's hand; I couldn't imagine who it was from. When she came in I handed it to her; she read it and gave a big sigh, and crumpled it up in her hand. She sat still a long while, and at last I asked her who it was from; she said, 'From *him*'; I asked her how he could have found out where she was, and she said she supposed that was easy enough, as he probably knew they had sailed for Bremen—it wouldn't be difficult to trace us. I didn't say any thing more about it, and four days afterward another letter arrived in the same hand; I tried to find out from both of them what he wanted, but neither my aunt nor Alice would tell me a word; I found out though. That afternoon aunt went to her banker's, I was with her, and she bought a draft on Nice, and then we came back by the way of the postoffice, and she stopped to mail a letter,

"That rascal has been begging for money. I caught aunt crying to-day, and told her what I thought was going on, but she wouldn't say anything—thinks I'm too young.

"Arthur couldn't come, I suppose, but I wish you would try to.

"Alice must have thought a lot of him; you'd say so if you could see as much of her as I do.

"Don't wait until you're gray before you answer this, and *do* come if you can.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN ELMER."

I read it to Arthur. When I had finished he got up and walked slowly up and down the room. When he turned to me and spoke, the listless look had disappeared, and was replaced by a hard determination; the letter had roused him to action.

"Will you start for Nice to-night?"

I made a virtue of necessity and said I would. If I had not, he would have gone alone.

He rang for the clerk of our floor, paid our bill, and two hours later we rolled out of the Gare du Nord, en route for the Mediterranean—and, I told myself, a dangerous encounter.

We are walking on the promenade by the shores of the blue sea; the *gommeux parisiens*, the erect, awkward striding English women,

some of them holding by the hand babies of three or four years, dressed, even to the flapping trowsers, like the tars of the country which is popularly supposed to rule the waves, elastic-stepping American women and their escorts, the best dressed, and usually the best looking, among the crowd which has no other thought than the full enjoyment of the thoroughly comfortable air, and the genial southern sunlight, which, in that region, has a character of its own, make of the promenade this breezy afternoon, one of the brightest spots in Europe. Not a word had been said in reference to the object of our long journey. Arthur had volunteered no information as to his plans, and I had asked for none; to do so would have been superfluous; I knew he was determined to have an explanation with the man who had destroyed his future. I was sure there would be trouble of some sort.

We had been walking, perhaps half an hour, and I was getting tired: "Haven't you had about enough of this?"

"No," he answered, "I am looking for *him*; you can go back to the hotel if you like; I will join you presently."

As he spoke, we came face to face with Purvie, and at his side was Mlle. Troisfois! I was amazed; my angriest thoughts of him had never given him credit for such infernal devil-

try as bringing that woman to Europe with him a few days after his marriage. As he caught sight of us, he turned red and the color instantly faded, leaving him as white as his collar. I hastily told Arthur who his companion was. We stopped when they had passed us, and looked after them.

Arthur stretched his arm out, pointing at them :

"Do you see that?" he said, sternly, bitterly, "there is no justice on earth," he walked on a few steps irresolutely and stopped again. "Van, go back to the hotel and wait for me." He looked dangerous, and I refused. "Very well, then, come on." He turned round and walked so rapidly I had difficulty in keeping up with him.

"What are you going to do?" I inquired.

He paid no attention to my question, but kept on, looking eagerly ahead. He was a little in front of me. I saw him approach Purvie on the side furthest from the woman and touch him on the arm. As I came up he was saying, while indicating a spot where we would be free from observation : "I'll meet you there then in fifteen minutes." "All right," the other replied and went on slowly,

Arthur walked nervously up and down, his working face and his silence telling of the suppressed excitement that would vent itself in the

coming interview. I was seriously apprehensive that the adventure would end unfortunately, perhaps tragically; he was impulsive and when roused would not stop to think of consequences; he held his life so cheaply too, now that she was lost to him. Mentally resolving to do my best to avert trouble, I awaited Purvie's return as calmly as I could.

At length he came; he walked straight up to Arthur with an air which in him was too bold not to have been assumed, and said briskly, "Well, sir, I have humored you by keeping this peculiar appointment; now what do you want of me?"

Arthur stood perfectly still, his hands crossed behind his back, and slowly surveyed the man who stood before him; it must have been fully a minute before he spoke: "Why is it," he began with an ugly smile, "that you do not greet either Van or myself as your friend?" As the other was about to reply he said sharply, "Stop! *I* will tell you why," the passion was rising in him, and his eyes were beginning to flash, "because, to deceive a girl whom you are not fit to look upon, you wrote or had written a letter supposed to have been sent by her to you; that letter was a forgery."

Purvie was shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "It was not a forgery; she sent it to me. What right—"

Arthur broke out vehemently, "You lie!" He waited for the blow he thought would come, but the coward tremblingly spluttered out:

"What do you mean, sir, by insulting me? You shall answer for this;" he turned and was walking away.

Arthur said, "Come back here, I am not through with you yet."

He turned half round and looked toward us, and, after a moment of indecision, he retraced his steps and stood before us once more, a criminal before his judge; he attempted a little more indignation, but my friend paid no attention to him.

"That was the first dishonorable thing you did, and you succeeded in getting rid of your rival; the second piece of villainy you indulged in was to have published the notice of my engagement to an English woman: that was the most venial of all your crimes. Then, you cunningly played upon Miss Brainard's belief that she had been scornfully thrown over, which impression you had created and fostered, until, in a moment of pique, she consented to marry you, and you thought you had her fortune securely within your grasp, for it was her money you were after. But I had left behind me a good friend, to whom my honor was as dear as his own, and the woman I had loved he determined to protect from the wiles of a scoundrel

like you, as he would have shielded his sister ; he discovered your plot, and but for a telegram sent by your accomplice, would have foiled you, and the great wrong you have committed have been made impossible."

Arthur paused and waited a moment, but the other remained silent, nervously tapping his shoe with his cane, his eyes upon the ground.

"Even that is not the worst. During all the time you were calling upon your victim, you were continuing a disgraceful liaison with a ballet-dancer in Philadelphia, and now that you have finished your foul scheme, you, the husband of the best woman that ever lived, flaunt this creature in the face of the world. It was to obtain money to satisfy her demands that you sought to drag that poor girl down to your level." He stepped close to Purvie, who drew back cringing, and continued—

"Do you know why I have come here? I will tell you. The wrong you have done me, I might have forgiven, but you have dared to injure *her*. Did you think retribution would not overtake you? In this country the code of honor is still resorted to and I shall kill you."

Purvie trembled like a leaf, but was still silent.

"Won't you speak, you cowardly blackguard? Will no insult arouse a little manliness? You miserable cur, shall I have to strike you?"

Arthur raised his hand; Purvie quickly stepped backward and cried excitedly—

“If you dare to strike me, I will circulate the report all over Europe that you are her lover.”

“Damn you!” Arthur cried, springing toward him with upraised arm. I rushed between them just in time to seize his wrist, and push him back.

“He will do it,” I cried. “Remember Alice.”

Her name quieted him.

“Will you meet me?” he inquired almost persuasively of Purvie, who now that he had found a means of escape had lost the expression of abject fear and was once more arrogant.

“No,” he replied, “and if you try to force a duel upon me, I will say, I can not fight on account of a woman who sends her lover to put me out of the way.”

If I had not been there to restrain Arthur, that speech would have cost Purvie his life. I flung both arms around my friend and struggled with all my might to keep him back, while I shouted,

“Go! you cowardly fool, or he will kill you!”

I had scarcely enough breath to enunciate the words. I was exerting all my strength, while Arthur, infuriated, was shouting:

"Let me go, for God's sake, Van, let me go?"

"I will not," I said, and I did not, until Purvie disappeared round a distant corner.

The scene from beginning to end had lasted not more than fifteen minutes, yet when it was over, I felt as if I had done a hard day's work. Arthur picked up his hat and stick, buttoned his coat, which I had almost dragged off, and we started to return to the hotel. We walked some distance before a word was spoken; he was the first to break the silence.

"I am glad you were there, Van, I think I should have killed him, and then the scandal would have reached Alice. Yes, I am glad I did not kill him," he continued deliberately, as if hardly convinced that he really ought to have allowed him to escape with his life.

"Don't you see, Arthur, that if you were to thrash the hound as he deserves, he would do as he threatened, and he would suffer less than Alice? Even if you were to 'call him out,' which you would not do, because we are not living in the eighteenth century, your vengeance would still only make matters worse. If you should take his life, the world would utter the vile slander."

He turned upon me indignantly.

"Do you mean to say I can not call him to account?"

“How can you?”

“I can not see my way clearly yet, but I hope to think out a plan. I believe the things he has done should not go unpunished, and some day we shall have a reckoning.”

XIV.

WHEN we were down by the sea once more, he met a young Englishman he knew, and introduced him as Lord Rico; he was a tall, slim, weak-eyed, fair-haired boy with a suspicion of white down on his lip. His extreme costume suggested a uniform.

"'Pon my life, Wardwell, you're the last fellah in the world I expected to see here—heard you were grinding at your profession again, going in for work, and that sort of thing, don't you know."

"I've been over some weeks; how are your mother and sisters?"

"They're jolly; didn't bring them with me this time—just ran over for a lark. You must go and see them when you're in England—they'll be awf'ly pleased to see you again, you know."

"Thank you, I hardly think I shall cross the channel this time—in fact, I haven't made up my mind what I shall do."

"Just like me—I'm knocking about—felt bored at home and thought I'd try it here; the girls often speak of you; Gwen says she

never can forget the time you stopped her horse—awf'ly plucky, that was."

"Nonsense," Arthur said, half annoyed; "have you left Oxford yet?"

"Oh, yes, I pulled through over a year ago. How long is it since you were at Woodside?"

"Three years."

"By Jove, it doesn't seem the half of it. What do you find to kill time with here? It's beastly stupid."

"We have only just arrived."

"Then you haven't seen the howling beauty? She's the most magnificent creature—"

We smiled at his enthusiasm—"No," I said, "we have not observed any one who would answer to that description. What is she like?"

"She is perfect—that's all I can tell you; she is dark, with black hair and jet black eyes, and her figure is like that statue in the Louvre—what is it?—er—the Venus de Milo, don't you know."

The boy's remarks had put a queer idea into my head.

"What is her name?" I asked.

"Mrs. Plaquemine, she's a young widow, a—what do you call it—Creole from New Orleans, a place in South America, you know."

I wondered if, among other things, they taught geography in British schools.

"You're quite sure to see her," he went on,

"she walks out every afternoon with a man by the name of Purdy—or Purvie, yes, that's it—deuced queer name, isn't it? I've been trying every way I knew to get an introduction to her, and yesterday I managed it at last; it was hard work, because this fellow she's with so much is terribly jealous, and the men at the club all say he is crazy over her; I don't blame him."

"Is she stopping at one of the hotels?"

"No, she says she has apartments—it seems there is a younger sister with her—she's a thoroughbred."

Arthur was chafing under his prattle, and I was restless too, so when we reached the door of our hotel we asked where he was stopping and remarked we would see him again; he left us and we went to our rooms.

I had had enough of Nice, and was determined to get him away, for I felt there was more or less risk in his meeting Purvie day after day. I proposed to him that we should go to southern Italy; he seemed pleased at the idea, and the next morning we started. We had no definite aim, no settled purpose that demanded haste, and, as time was not a factor in our calculations, we loitered idly about the streets and palaces of Genoa, until the spirit of unrest seized upon us and we drifted into Florence. As usual, the city was full of English and

Americans, and, as a matter of course, we met people we knew and renewed on more cordial terms the acquaintance which, at home, had gone no further than a distant nod of recognition. We were drawn into gayeties which at least one of us would have been thankful to have avoided. There was a grim satisfaction to Arthur in those days in brooding over the memory of her least word. Once he confessed to me that at times it almost angered him to be obliged to carry on a conversation with me, for when undisturbed he could, by the intense concentration of his thoughts, conjure up a vivid brain picture of the woman he loved; he could see again her fair young face, he could hear the pleasant voice, while the eyes once more stirred his soul with their wonderful influence and the touch of the hand that was lost would thrill his whole being with the ecstasy he would know no more save in dreams like this.

It was an unhealthy morbid state, and I urged him not to yield to it. I could see a change in him from week to week; the circles under his eyes grew darker; he was always pale now, and the far off vacant look was habitual with him. He had given up all hope, and very sensibly too, I thought, but the knowledge that no human effort could avail did not lessen his grief.

At length, one morning we mutually agreed that we had had enough of picture galleries and balls and receptions; we packed up and took the train for Rome.

If I were writing "A Tour in Europe," or "The Diary of a Maiden Lady Abroad," I should give you a conscientious description of the Italian cities and the inhabitants as I saw them. You would probably not thank me for the digression, and to say the truth, I was not particularly impressed; I had seen it all before, when I had religiously visited every thing set down in the guide books as worth seeing, and the edge was taken from my curiosity. We lingered in Rome until the impulse to wander again seized us and we journeyed to Naples. During the entire trip nothing of moment had occurred, and I was only waiting and longing for the time when Arthur should at last say he was tired of this aimless drifting and would go back to America and resume the old life.

One day a letter came from Jack; its contents sent us north with all speed; he wrote that Purvie had been demanding sums of money and had finally come to Stuttgart and extorted from Mrs. Brainard a large amount; he was half drunk, and, as Jack expressed it, was a "total wreck;" they had made such a row with him for threatening to throw him down

stairs, that he dared not offer to interfere again, but couldn't I suggest something? Alice was in a terrible state, was going around the house looking pale and ill, but for all that trying to comfort her mother, who was crying half the time.

I handed the letter to Arthur; he read it, and the look I had seen in his face that day in Nice was there again.

"We'll go to Stuttgart, Van. This thing has gone far enough; come what may, now, I shall stop it."

I made no attempt to thwart him. I, too, felt that it must be stopped, but why had they yielded to his demands? We could neither of us understand it. We were agreed that there was some mystery.

It was now eight weeks since we had left Nice; many circumstances changing the aspect of affairs might have occurred in that time. Jack would tell us what had transpired.

It was a weary monotonous ride back over all the ground we had so recently traversed. I should have been glad to break it by stopping at reasonable distances for a night's rest, but before Arthur was one objective point, and between Naples and our destination he saw nothing but the unavoidable lapse of time; while I could not lose sight of the fatigue and annoyance. He met my objections invariably

by asking me if I wanted to leave her at Purvie's mercy.

Even railway journeys in Europe, when the weather is any thing but mild, at last come to an end, and after Arthur had growled himself into a fever at the snail's pace of the train and the frequent stoppages, we at length came to a final stop in the large station at Stuttgart.

We engaged rooms in the Hotel Marquardt, my friend being careful to secure those "giving on the street"—I guessed, in order that he might see her, should she fortunately pass. We had talked it over as we traveled northward, and had arrived at the conclusion that he must remain a close prisoner during the hours Alice usually went out, and that she was to be kept in ignorance of his presence in the city. A meeting would be painful to both of them, and if it were known he had visited her the bitter tongue of scandal would bruit the news abroad with damaging embellishments. When I had changed my travel-stained clothes for more presentable and comfortable garments, being urged the while not to be so confoundedly slow, I sallied forth in search of the Brainards. I had not far to go, for, as I descended the steps of the hotel and reached the side-walk, I saw Jack Elmer directly opposite just emerging from the Arcade, looking as jaunty and careless as ever, a thick cane in his hand and a

cigar in his mouth. He did not observe me, but, turning to the left, sauntered up the street at a gait which indicated that he had no intention of following the example of the man who died in a hurry. I called "Jack!" He turned quickly, gave a surprised exclamation, and his face was a burst of smiles, as he ran across the street and seized my hands. For a moment he could not utter an intelligible sound.

"Well, Jack, I am as glad to be here as you are to see me; how are Alice and your aunt?"

"If this isn't a big surprise. How'd you get here? No, I don't mean that. When did you come? Lord! won't they be glad to see you; yes, they're well—that is, pretty well; don't have the doctor, you know; but, great Scott! ain't they cheerful!"

"You know, you wrote me two letters, Jack."

"Yes, and you didn't hurt yourself answering them, did you?"

"I did not reply to you because I was with Arthur, and I thought there was no chance of getting here, and I did not want you to ask me point blank to come, for then I should have felt obliged to."

"Arthur's back in New York, is he?"

"Oh! you didn't know of course. I've been over here nine weeks with him."

Jack looked at me with open-eyed amazement:

"The deuce you have ; where have you been staying?"

"We've been traveling pretty constantly."

"Where's Arthur now?"

"He is here."

"What?" he gasped. "Come on, take me to him," he cried eagerly, seizing my arm.

We went into the hotel and ascended to our rooms. I entered first. Arthur was at the window looking out to catch a glimpse of her perhaps. "Here's an old friend of yours," I said.

Jack ran past me, and the two shook hands and looked into each other's faces as if they had been brothers, instead of recent friends only. If Jack's pleasure at seeing me was great, his delight at once more looking upon Arthur was ten times greater.

"Well," he said earnestly, "if it don't seem like old times to shake hands with you ; how long you going to stay?" he inquired a little anxiously, still retaining Arthur's hand, and looking with a glad expression into his eyes.

"I can not tell, Jack ; I have come to be of use if I can, and I shall remain as long as necessary. Now, old man, sit down, have a cigar ; here's a light. Tell me, how are you all?"

The other understood the question : "She is all right ; of course she isn't happy, you know, but she's well."

Arthur was standing with his elbow on the mantle; he attentively regarded the end of his cigar, and carefully flipped the ash off, as he inquired, "Has—has that—scoundrel seen her again?"

"No, not since that time when he was here and got that lot of money out of aunt. I suppose it'll last him a while."

"Has he written?"

"No, I think not. He told Alice as his last letter had not produced any effect, he should come for money in future when he wanted it. He went on terribly at her. She begged him not to come again. She was crying all the while. He said he would come, because he had found out it annoyed her. I heard her crying, and went into the room and commenced to tell him what I thought of him, but Alice stopped me, and begged me in a whisper to leave them alone together. Well, you know, nobody can resist her, so I went out, but I'd have given any thing to have thrown him out. I don't see why they keep giving him money!"

"Don't you know the reason either?"

"No."

Arthur turned to me, "Van, he must have used some threat; will you find out what it is? Jack, I want you to promise not to say a word about my being here, not to utter a syllable that will give them a hint of it." The boy

was visibly disappointed: "Not even to Alice?"

"Above all, not to her."

"What the mischief did you come here for, if you don't want to see her?"

"I will tell you. When we heard through your letter that Purvie had been here, I knew he would come again as soon as his funds were exhausted. I knew also, that he must have found some means of intimidating your aunt and—*her*, into complying unhesitatingly with his demands. I think I understand his nature well enough to be sure that those demands would grow more exacting and less bearable as he found he could make them with impunity, and I have come here to put an end to this outrage by some means—I care not what. When he comes again I want you to inform me instantly, and I will find a way to render him harmless for the future." He spoke calmly, deliberately, but again that dangerous hardness stole into his face and made me anxious to see Mrs. Brainard and make Arthur's interference unnecessary.

"You can bet, I'll let you know the minute he sets foot in the house. How I'd like to see you thrash him," Jack said with enthusiasm.

"What do you find to amuse yourselves with?"

"We are not having a lively time. We

drive a good deal, and I have been to the opera, and just over there, there's a place where I go for my beer every afternoon—I've settled down into a regular Dutchman; it was worse when we first got here, but I've picked up a little of the language and manage to get along; it isn't America though. I asked aunt the other day, why she staid here. She said we couldn't go back to New York and face people's questions. I wish you'd try to persuade her to pull up stakes and go somewhere else, Van."

"I will, and now, if the ladies are at home, suppose you take me to them."

Their apartments were not far from our hotel, and a walk of perhaps ten minutes brought us to the door. Jack led the way into the reception room, and left me to announce "a friend"; he would not tell them who it was, he said, he wanted to surprise them.

Mrs. Brainard came in first. I believe she was unfeignedly glad to see me. "It is so good," she said, "to see a face from home. We owe you so much, and I have not had an opportunity to thank you for all you did; I think you know we are grateful; it seems hard, that your letter should have arrived too late."

"Can nothing be done? It would be easy to secure a divorce; it might be arranged quietly, so that the world would still be in ignorance of the whole affair."

She sighed. "I have thought of that, and would be willing, and I dare say money would buy his promise not to oppose the proceedings, but Alice looks at the matter in a peculiar light ; she says she believes that once the words are spoken which make two people man and wife, they can never, in the sight of heaven, be separated by human means ; that is what she always says, and I fear nothing will move her. She acknowledges the tie, but will not bear his name, and shrinks from him and from all mention of him, as if he were utterly abhorrent to her. What can I do ?"

The sad earnestness of her tones distressed me ; I was about to ask her, if she thought any thing I might say would change her determination, when the door opened and Alice came in ; she advanced a few steps and paused, as if overcome by surprise ; "Is it really you," she said, "I am so glad to see you. Can you forgive me?"

I rose and took her hand.

"Why there is nothing to forgive." I was a little puzzled.

"Oh ! yes, there is," she insisted, smiling faintly, "there are lots of things." A shade passed over her face. "There is my lack of faith in your friend, my untruthfulness to you, and my rudeness that night at our house ; but let us talk of more cheerful subjects," she contin-

ued, making a brave effort at gayety. "When did you arrive, and where did you come from last, and how long since you left home?"

"To reply to your last question first, I left New York about eleven weeks ago, I came last from Naples, and I arrived here two hours ago."

"So long! You came for pleasure, I presume?"

"Well—not exactly, though I have not found the trip altogether unpleasant."

"Have you been traveling—alone?"

She was looking down, I fancied her cheek had paled a little. I must give a direct answer to that question, but come what would, I was determined not to tell her he was here:

"I have been with Arthur Wardwell ever since my arrival in Paris, over nine weeks ago."

She looked me straight in the face:

"Is—is he with you here?"

"No," I said, firmly. As I uttered the falsehood, I felt my face grow hot. Did she suspect I had not spoken the truth? I could not tell.

"Is he quite well?" she asked, hesitatingly; I quite unintentionally paused an instant, and she clasped her hands and her breath came quicker and her eyes grew big with a pained anxiety.

"Yes, but he has changed. I think he has

grown years older in the past two months." As I looked at her, so, I thought, had she ; it was not that the touch of time's withering hand had fallen upon her, but into the face that had been so carelessly happy, had come an expression of weary, patient endurance ; she was wonderfully beautiful, but it was now the half-sad face of a Madonna, her eyes seemed to me to look beyond this life's concerns into another existence. How few short years she had lived, to have found out already that the world held nothing which could bring her joy ! She did not pursue the subject, and soon I found myself giving dry particulars of our travels. How quietly she listened ! how little she said ! Her whole air was as if misfortune had crushed her ; and yet, I reflected, half inclined to be angry with her, how easily she could cast him off ! With the evidence I had of his disgraceful connection with that French woman, it would only be a question of a few necessary formalities and she would be free. In a moment of thoughtlessness, I alluded to our visit to Nice, and on her mother's asking me if I had seen ' that man ' there, she pleaded indisposition and left us, expressing the hope that they would see me every day while I remained in the town.

" You see," her mother said, " how it has changed her, and to think that all her life she

must suffer from his persecution! it is enough to shake one's faith."

"Mrs. Brainard, there is a question I have been wanting to ask you ever since I received Jack's first letter: What threat does the wretch use to extort money from you?"

"Had you not guessed the means such a creature would employ? He says that if Alice does not comply with every request he makes, he will enforce his rights as her husband, and we dare not refuse. He is the most contemptible villain that ever lived," she went on scornfully, "but she is in his power; when her fortune is exhausted mine will go too, and then God help us! he will take what is dearer to me than all the gold in the world!" She hastily drew her handkerchief from her pocket, and turning from me walked to the window.

I was astounded to learn that this bare-faced scamp had had the assurance to practice such a puerile trick; he calculated that he could frighten two helpless women, alone in a strange land, into easy compliance.

"Mrs. Brainard—"

She said in a tremulous voice, "What is it?"

"You need not have given that scoundrel one penny."

She turned round and regarded me in amazed silence.

"No," I repeated, "not one penny. When he

asks for more money, simply refer him to your lawyer."

"What do you mean?"

"His life since the wedding makes any claim from him absurd, and you would only have to threaten him with a suit for divorce; he will insist no longer."

"You don't know how grateful I am to you for taking this load from my mind. You have been so good to us; I can never thank you sufficiently."

She took my hand, and I was ashamed to think how undeserving I was of such unstinted gratitude. The sudden transition from gloomy forebodings of the future to the thoughts of relief from that fiend's importunity made her positively radiant. She could hardly yet realize the full import of the good news. "You say we may actually defy him?" she said, inquiringly.

"Certainly."

The positiveness of my reply convinced her.

Jack returned, and promising to see them the next day, and begging she would command me in any thing if I could serve them, we went out.

I repeated to Jack on the way back to the hotel what I had said to his aunt, and it may be imagined he was delighted.

"Don't be too confident that the trouble is

all over yet," I said ; " the loss of all chance of getting money is worse to such a fellow than the loss of his soul ; I am not sure he won't try something desperate."

" He'd better not if Arthur is here the next time he comes."

I made no reply to this ; I had no great confidence in what my friend could do. I was fearful, too, that he might be guilty of rashness, which would only create a scandal.

I recounted to Arthur what had occurred, telling him over and over again all that concerned Alice. Did I think her changed, was she happy, or sad, had she spoken of him, what was it she said, again ? So he learned the little there was for his heart to feed upon, until I should see her once more.

XV.

JACK was back and forth a dozen times a day ; I think fully half of his leisure was spent in our rooms ; this was a boon to Arthur, but even with our companionship, he said the sense of being kept a close prisoner gave him an idea of what the despair must be of a convict sentenced to imprisonment for life ; he dared not sit too much at the window for fear she might, in passing, recognize him ; not until the evening was he free to leave the house. He fretted inwardly at the restraint, the idea of her proximity, and the impossibility of their meeting, galling him to the verge of rashly resolving to risk every thing and seek an interview.

One day I asked him if he had seen her. No, he had not ; she must never walk in this direction, he could swear she had not once passed the hotel. Wouldn't I try again to find out when she was in the habit of going out, and in what direction she usually walked ?

That afternoon I told him if he wanted so much to see her from a distance, and did not mind running a little risk of being discovered, I thought I could suggest a plan ; he was eager

to know the details, and I explained that she and her mother were going for a drive in about an hour, and the weather being unusually mild for that time of year, would take an open carriage ; I knew the direction they would take, and, by posting himself at the corner of a certain street, where there was a café, he could obtain a glimpse of her as they passed on their return.

Half an hour before there was the remotest possibility of their getting back, he was at his post waiting with beating heart. At last they rolled by and he saw again the face that was always before him, and, for the moment, he was satisfied ; but I think that little glimpse of heaven made it more difficult for me to restrain him from attempting to scale the barriers of conventional propriety.

Every evening, after devoting an hour or two to a stroll with Jack and me, when it grew late he would station himself opposite the window I had told him was hers and watch the shadow on the curtain ; sometimes he would come back elated, and I knew he would tell me he had, by good luck, seen her face indistinctly for a moment as she had arranged the draperies : it was pitiful.

It was on a Tuesday ; we had been there I think about a week. Arthur and I were smoking our after dinner cigar and trying to find some

new point of view from which to survey the situation. The door was thrown open violently and Jack almost fell into the room; he was wildly excited.

"Hurry up," he panted, "if you want to see him; he's there!"

Arthur had jumped up, snatched his hat and rushed out, closely followed by Jack, before I fairly comprehended that Purvie had arrived. There would be another encounter, and this time more than words would come of it. Arthur's frame of mind was dangerous. These thoughts occurred to me while I was drawing on my coat, and preparing to follow him; I would not of course let them come together while I was absent if I could prevent it.

When I reached the street they were nowhere in sight—they must have run I thought. I followed more leisurely. I knew Arthur's idea had been to meet Purvie as he came out, so there was no hurry after all.

When they had left me Jack said Purvie was alone with Alice in the reception room, and they were having high words,—that wasn't more than five minutes ago. "Come on," said Arthur, setting his teeth together, and they had redoubled their pace. Arrived at the house he stopped for an instant and inquired, "Is there a place where I can hear without being seen?"

"Yes, this way."

They ascended the stairs softly and stood just outside the door. Alice was speaking; her voice had a ring of distress that was almost plaintive—"But you once said you loved me. Will you not for the sake of that love cease persecuting me? Do you not see you are driving me to distraction? I can not give you all we have in the world, but I will send you a stated sum every month, will not that content you?"

"No!" he exclaimed in a loud, grating tone. "What's yours is mine, do you understand? And I've told you often enough that if you don't come down with all the money I want I'll make you live with me. Don't shudder! that's what makes me mad; you think you're too good for me, and I've had about enough of your airs. You'll either give me two thousand pounds to-morrow or I'll force you to keep the promises you made when you married me."

Her voice changed; it was proud and scornful now. "I have patiently listened to your threats and abuses; I have offered to give you money—you have declined it. Now I tell you to leave this house instantly. Your assertion that you can enforce your rights as my husband is an empty boast. I shall never again give you one penny, and if you force your way into my presence my servants will show you the door."

The watchers in the hall heard an angry

exclamation, followed by the noise of some one rising and stepping across the floor; then came a slight cry of pain; Purvie's voice was again raised, this time in a hissing burst of anger.

"That's it, is it? You she-devil! You want to get rid of me, and you think I don't know for what. If you refuse to give me that money, before one week every one will know that you don't live with your husband because you prefer your lover."

There was a rush of hurrying feet and before he could look round a strong hand was on his throat, and he was sent whirling to the other end of the room, where he fell over a chair with a crash, and sank down by the wall a limp, scared mass.

Alice, relieved from the grasp of his hand, stood before Arthur gazing with wondering surprise into his face. "Arthur," she uttered faintly, a word died on her lips, and she sank unconscious into his arms. He looked at her for a moment as he held her, all the longing of his soul shining in his eyes; the sight made his blood boil; he tenderly placed her on a lounge and advanced toward Purvie, who had regained his feet and was standing white and scared, somewhat as he had done, Arthur thought, when the horse had thrown him, and his cowardice had first become apparent. It is a curious fact that however great the provocation, strong

natures hesitate to strike a coward ; it was that feeling which saved Purvie, for in the heat of passionate indignation at the violence Alice had suffered, Arthur was capable of strangling him.

As the two men confronted each other, the one trembling with rage, the other cowering apprehensively, Mrs. Brainard came hurriedly into the room and went directly to Alice. Arthur approached her, and stooping over, said,

“Forgive me for coming here, I did it for her sake. Perhaps I was wrong. I feared that brute would insult her—I go away to-night—shall never see her again—nor will he.”

She rose and gave him her hand. “If it had only been you!” she said, regretfully.

“My God!” he broke out, “how I love her!” he was on his knees and had taken the hand which hung helplessly over the side of the lounge ; he bent his head, hesitated, and looked up at the mother ; she understood him and nodded : he kissed the hand, and when he released it a tear glistened there.

“Farewell !” he said, and turned to Purvie a face cruelly stern. “Come !”

The three, he and Jack and the crestfallen Purvie, went out together. I joined them as they emerged from the house. If I had seen Purvie somewhere where I had not expected

to find him I think I would not have known him. His appearance shocked me. It was not that his dress was less neat, but his face had every characteristic of the confirmed drunkard; the bleared eyes, the blotched and swollen cheeks, the red nose, and the extreme emaciation which everywhere, except in his face, had changed him to something but little more substantial than a shadow. It was a strange situation as we stood grouped on the walk. Arthur still wore the threatening look; he regarded Purvie loweringly, as he said with concentrated earnestness:—

“I do not make idle threats, and what I am about to say I mean. If you again seek an interview with *her*, or in any way annoy her—in *any* way!” he repeated impressively, “as sure as there is a God I will publicly thrash you! And if I hear from any source one word against her good name, I will credit you with having put the lie in circulation and will call you to account.”

The other answered not a word, but with as erect a carriage as his evident fear would permit him to assume he walked down the street and passed out of sight. We never saw him again.

Arthur broke down; the strain of passion being removed his nerves gave way; he turned from us muttering—“It is all over—all over!”

We let him go on alone and we followed, not any too gayly.

That night Jack bade us good-by forlornly and we left Stuttgart. We were going to Munich.

The history of the next six weeks is soon and easily told; it was marked by no event which at this distance of time comes back to me vividly enough to be worthy of record here. We were wanderers again: seeking nothing that was attainable, but mildly interested in the old things we had seen and the few new ones the slower progress of the old world civilization had created since our former visit. We met many acquaintances; some we were glad to greet, and others whose society we could easily have dispensed with; there were interesting types among them, now that they were removed from the setting of their native surroundings, but as nothing they did, or said, or thought, has any bearing on the fortunes or character of the actors in this story, they shall, in mercy to the reader, be rigidly excluded.

We idled the time away with sketching and riding and billiards, and a little society; a very little of the latter, for Arthur had grown too hard and cynical to be altogether agreeable. I remember we went from Munich to Venice, and soon tiring of that, to Vienna; we remained there but a short time, being drawn westward

by the consciousness that after all nothing in Europe quite equals the scenery and the luxurious convenience of Switzerland.

If it had been possible for me to feel entirely indifferent to my friend's grief, I think I should esteem the few days spent at Seelisberg on Lake Lucerne the most perfect the earth had ever yielded me. Now that my mind is at ease, I wonder that I could at Arthur's suggestion have been persuaded to leave the place. From time to time I received letters from Jack; they had left Stuttgart two days after Purvie's last visit, and had gone to Paris, afterward to Ems and Wiesbaden, and according to a recent letter, which was dated from the latter place, were about starting for Zurich. They were well, and his cousin and aunt were more tranquil; they had neither seen nor heard any thing more of "that scoundrel." Jack was having a glorious time and had not wanted to leave Paris: he supposed Switzerland "wasn't bad though;" he hoped they would meet us somewhere.

I got that letter on the first of July; on the third we were in Lucerne. I have good reasons for being positive as to the exact date; on that day, after breakfast, as my friend and I were going out for a walk a newspaper with my name on the wrapper was handed to me. It was an issue of the "New York Herald" of

June the tenth. I hastily glanced through it and observed that a paragraph among the "Foreign Intelligence" had been marked with a red pencil. It was headed in large capitals:

"THE LATEST SENSATION IN NICE."

"SUICIDE FOLLOWS UNREQUITED LOVE."

"A young man by the name of Philo. D. Purvie, who is well known in the best circles of New York society, fell in love with a charming widow, a Mrs. Plaquemine, from New Orleans, a Creole of enormous wealth. The lady, it is said, did not return his affection, and when she went away, a week ago, with a very young Englishman, Lord Rico, leaving a cruel note for her distracted adorer, his despair at losing forever the object of his passion unsettled his intellect, and to drown his sorrow he had recourse to drink. Last night, after returning from Monaco, where he was observed to be both drinking and losing heavily, he purchased two ounces of laudanum, and retiring to his apartments, swallowed half of it after writing a short incoherent note, in which he said his life had been a mistake, that he had realized it too late, and having lost the only woman he ever cared for there was no inducement to live longer.

"This morning he was found in his bed, dead. In his hand was a photograph of the

woman for whom he had rashly sacrificed his life, and on a table was the half-emptied bottle of laudanum.

"The affair has created but little stir in society here, as the deceased had few friends and no intimates in this city."

It is probably wrong to feel happy at the death of a fellow creature, and is usually considered reprehensible unless it be a rich relative who has lived too long, but I must confess to experiencing a sense of joyous relief at the demise of our common enemy that no other happening I can remember ever brought with it. In these few printed lines was freedom for Alice and happiness at last for her and Arthur and all of us. I could have blessed the suicide for the great service he had rendered us. I was on the point of turning to Arthur and showing him the paper when I remembered that twice before false reports had brought upon him the trouble of his life, and perhaps this also was simply a trick. I telegraphed to the proprietor of the hotel in Nice where Purvie had been stopping, asking if a man by the name of Philo. D. Purvie had committed suicide in his house five weeks ago. In an hour the answer came, "Yes. His effects are still unclaimed."

Arthur came back from his walk, and said, in a determined, settled tone :

“Well, Van, you will be pleased to hear that I have decided to return home. I can stand this life no longer.”

“I want you to stay here, now.”

He was puzzled. “Why, you have been urging me constantly to go back.”

“There is no reason for it now.”

He grew pale. “What do you mean,” he asked faintly.

I handed him the paper and the telegram; he read them and sank into a chair.

“Van—this—Alice—will—” he could not go on, his chest heaved, his emotion was choking him: in charity I turned away. The swift transition from the long accumulated despondency, and the settled conviction that nothing which could possibly happen would ever in this life bring fulfillment to his now relinquished hopes, to the knowledge, coming to him all in an instant, that every hindrance to the realization of his dreams was swept away, was too much for him. He had bravely withstood the misfortunes which fate had been showering upon him; the wounds had evoked no murmur, but what grief had failed to do joy had accomplished, and at last he buried his face in his arm and cried like a child. I feel no shame in recording that my eyes might have been less moist, as I stole a glance at this strong, self-contained nature so deeply moved by the sud-

den joy. A portion of the relief he felt I experienced in a much fainter degree, and a little of the happy anticipation was mine also.

During the next few days, I sometimes caught myself wondering that nature should wear so different an aspect, that the people who a week ago had bored and annoyed me should be transformed into the pleasantest fellows in the world, that petty vexations should no longer seem like real troubles, and that the impression that all the world was against my friend and myself had vanished, and, in its place, was a peaceful contentment which was shared by both of us.

You will be asking why we did not fly to the Brainards without loss of time. The explanation is simple: We did not know where they were. They had started for Switzerland, but they might be in any one of a hundred different places. The best plan would be to wait as patiently as possible for Jack's next letter, and this we did, remaining in Lucerne; it came, after Arthur's impatience had begun to evince itself in an alert nervousness and the consumption of double the usual number of cigars. He immediately became serene again, when he read that they were at Berne and would be in Lucerne the following day. Of course we would wait for them. How he got through the hours that must intervene now before he should see her

is best known to himself ; he studiously shunned my society. After breakfast the next morning I was watching the people embark on the boat for Vitznau, when he joined me.

“I have made inquiries at the office,” he said, vigorously puffing at his cigar, “and find there is a train arriving from Berne at seven o’clock : I want to say a word to you about my meeting with her—I want you to let me see her first alone, I—I would rather explain every thing myself, if you don’t mind.” That matter was settled and he left me again.

The day wore on and at length half past seven came, and from my window I saw them arrive. I went into Arthur’s room to tell him they had come ; he was cautiously peering out ; “I know it,” he said, and turned toward me a pale face fairly illuminated by the unnatural brightness of the eyes. In half an hour he sent an attendant to their room with one of my cards and a message to the effect that the gentleman desired to see *Miss Brainard* alone for a few moments ; he brought back the reply that she would receive the gentleman at once. Arthur’s whole life depended upon the next quarter of an hour, and he looked as if he understood it as he walked out of the room. The door was indicated to him ; he says he paused an instant to gather courage for the ordeal ; he knocked and entered ; there she

stood directly opposite to him, the light from the chandelier falling upon her startled face ; she raised her arms in quick surprise, " You," she murmured faintly, taking a step backward, then, as he advanced his eyes fell upon her face, she looked and it seemed that some irresistible force drew her toward him ; her breath came quick and short ; the love that was there, the passion she had tried to smother at last found expression, " Arthur," she cried softly, tenderly ; he went quickly toward her, " My darling," he whispered hoarsely. His arms were almost round her, when, uttering a startled cry, she recoiled, half turning from him, and with a quick gesture pushed back his hand. " No, no, no," she said, with earnest insistence, as if fearful that her love might make her weaker than her conscience told her she could dare to be, " it is wrong, wrong. Oh ! to think that *you* should do this thing," she turned upon him a look of tearful reproach.

That look brought back a little of the reason which had been swallowed up in the intoxication of being once more in her dear presence ; there she was, actually standing not ten feet from him, as beautiful, as maddeningly lovely as only she could be, and this was no dream, for he had heard her call him " Arthur." Yes, yes, it was real, it was true, true that she loved him, and that he might love her and might tell

her so, that was it; he must tell her so: "Alice, Alice, my darling," how he lingered on the words! She stopped him with a gesture, drawing herself up, and said almost coldly, while her hands clasped and unclasped themselves writhingly: "Arthur, do you know that while I am that man's wife, what you have said to me is an insult?" Her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears as she continued, brokenly, "I shall never see you again, and I can tell you now—it will do no harm—that I have been guilty enough to love you very dearly—No, stop! I wish I had died before you had struck me the cruelest blow I have had to suffer. For God's sake leave me now!"

"Alice," he burst out exulting, "you are free!"

She turned swiftly, doubt and expectancy in her wide open eyes, as she leaned eagerly forward.

"He is dead," he said, quickly. A little convulsive sound came from between her parted lips and she was in his arms, her cheek was pressed against his shoulder; she looked up tenderly—all the love that had waited so long, in her swimming eyes. As he bent his head and she saw the happiness there, the past seemed a dream; her arm stole softly around his neck. Their lives were complete.

THE END,

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